



To Rev. James Dick,
with kindest regards of
The Author.

3^d June, 1857.

A

MEMORIAL OF COVENANTING.

BY

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P R E F A C E .

THE idea of emitting this "Memorial" originated in the writer's proposal to visit the United States of America. As the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Body in that country had adopted measures for the public renewal of the British Covenants,—adapting them to the circumstances of those who acknowledge their moral obligation and adhere to their grand principles, in a different land,—he was desirous of contributing whatever was in his power to further so important a movement. By relating what the Church's exalted Head had done, in leading His servants in one country to pledge themselves anew to His service by sacred vows, and to lift up a standard for despised truths, and by exhibiting the salutary effects flowing from federal dedication, it was hoped that others might be excited and encouraged to "yield themselves to the Lord," and might be directed in the performance of an all-important duty.

Although the greater part of the Memorial was written previous to his setting out for America, yet, owing to various pressing engagements, the author was unable to revise it for the press; and while sojourning in a distant land, he could not find leisure, as he at one time had expected, to have the work issued there. So soon after his return as he could command time, he betook himself to the completion of the narrative. It is now presented to the public, with the design of perpetuating the remembrance of the Lord's covenant-faithfulness toward one portion of his heritage; and with the earnest desire that beloved brethren at a distance, united in the same brotherly covenant, may be encouraged and blessed in their labours and trials for the truth's sake;—and that some who are inquiring after the “GOOD OLD WAY,” may be led, by the views here exhibited, to “walk therein,” and thus to “find rest for their souls.”

In a narrative of Covenant-renovation, it seemed proper to present a condensed argument on behalf of the doctrine of *continued covenant-obligation*, and to give a historical account of the British Covenants—of the revival of their principles, and of attempts that have been made for their public renewal—that such as have not ready access to larger works on these subjects may be informed of the solid grounds on which the principles of federal obligation rest, and that those who are desirous of union throughout the churches may have exhibited an approved basis of Scriptural fellowship, and co-operation for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

It is scarcely needful to add, that it was far from the writer's intention, by the publication of this Memorial, to interfere with the Synod's proposal to emit a Narrative of the recent work of Covenant-Renovation. Such an account would of course be condensed and unique, and of an authoritative character. To effect the different objects to which allusion has been made, this work required to be somewhat diffuse, and to treat of a variety of matters. For the sentiments and views of ecclesiastical movements which it propounds, the writer has no desire that any others save himself should be held accountable.

KNOCKBRACKEN, APRIL, 1857.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE duty of preserving and perpetuating the remembrance of God's gracious dealings with his Church is frequently enjoined and exemplified in Sacred Scripture. As a chief subject of grateful praise, God's people are commanded to "remember his marvellous works that He hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth, O ye seed of Abraham his servant, the children of Jacob his chosen."* The Church's pious resolution is declared to be to show to the generation to come what fathers have told them—"His strength, and the wonderful works which He hath done," and to transmit to posterity "the testimony and law which were left in Israel."†

The faithful have ever shown that alike devout gratitude, and the desire to advance the Divine glory, have prompted them to the ready performance of this duty. The pillars erected on the plains of Moab, at the end of the wanderings of Israel in the Arabian desert—the stones set up at Gilgal, when the passage of the Jordan had been effected—that which was selected by Joshua at Shechem, as a witness of renewed covenant-dedication—the song

* Psalm cv. 5, 6.

† Psalm lxxviii. 4, 5.

dictated by the Spirit to celebrate the passage of the Red Sea—and many of the sweet psalms of David were designed to preserve the lively remembrance of special Divine interpositions of mercy, and to make future generations acquainted with the displays of the power and grace of God—ever faithful to his covenant. The believing Church is taught to regard the transmission of such a record as not less her duty than her high privilege. “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”* And when eminent deliverances are experienced, and joyful victories have been achieved, the holy rejoicing of Zion is suitably represented, as considering diligently the stability of the Church, and making known to posterity the wonders wrought for her protection. “Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.”† On this principle have acted the witnesses for truth in all the bypast ages of the Church’s history. Reformers, confessors, and martyrs have all felt that they owed a special duty to the generations to come. They lived for posterity. Not only did they hold fast and display precious truths entrusted to them; but they sought likewise, amid manifold conflicts and sufferings, to transmit them uncorrupt to posterity. Their earnest endeavour was to make known God’s mighty acts, in ful-

* Psalm xlv. 16, 17.

† Psalm xlviii. 12, 13, 14.

filling his promise—in vindicating his truth—and in supporting and blessing his faithful servants.

The memorials which they have transmitted to us bear testimony to their fervent concern that God might have all the praise. In their estimation, the human instrumentality was nothing, that God might be all and in all. Like the angel worshippers in the prophet's vision, that cover their feet and veil their faces, they ascribed all excellence and honour to their glorious King, and exclaimed as they bowed at his throne, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."* Similar should be our desire and aim in preserving the memorials of the Lord's covenant—goodness to the Church, exhibited in our own day. The men of the present are the fathers of succeeding generations. If their duty is to make honourable mention of the Lord's faithfulness to their fathers, it is equally incumbent on them to observe and record the doings of his hand—that others coming after them may perpetuate his praise—that race may declare to succeeding race his mighty deeds.

The difficulty of presenting an impartial record of events as they take place, or soon after their occurrence, has been commonly remarked. The history of transactions that effect important changes in society, it is said, may be better written in the next generation, since the persons concerned in movements as they are taking place, are apt to attach to them undue importance; and posterity is better prepared to estimate aright their character, causes, and effects. This may be to some extent true, in reference to matters of mere worldly interest. But in

relation to those which have immediate respect to the Divine glory, displayed in interpositions in behalf of the Church of Christ for deliverance and blessing; it is, on the other hand, of primary importance that the record should date from the time that was signalized by special manifestations of Divine favour. Thus vivid impressions of God's mercy are in some sort retained and imparted to others. Those who have witnessed the plentiful effusions of God's Spirit, and have had experience of his covenant faithfulness, are best fitted, as it is their peculiar duty, to set up a monument of gratitude. The evidence thus furnished in behalf of God's gracious work in Zion, is the most powerful and satisfactory; and in future ages, the members of the Church, whether called to conflict and trial—or blessed with eminent privileges—obtain encouragement, and derive motives for devoted effort and joyful expectation, from considering the Lord's favour vouchsafed to their fathers.

Past periods of revival have been distinguished, not only for the effusion of the Spirit upon the Church, but likewise for the precious records that have been transmitted to us by those who were privileged to witness the glorious displays of Divine power and love, and who had a part in these auspicious movements. We have the inspired memorials of the first Pentecostal shower of the Spirit, and of subsequent revivals, in the times of primitive Christianity—full, minute, and affecting, written by contemporaneous historians. Many of the leading Reformers are the historians of their own times; and amidst labours most abundant, and manifold perils and sufferings, they regarded it as a paramount duty to register with all care what the Lord did in their

day for the revival of his truth—for the support and comfort of his faithful servants, and for the confusion of their enemies. The accounts of subsequent revivals, written by those who were concerned in them, and which have been preserved in the Church, have contributed no little to the encouragement and spiritual benefit of God's people. What a blank would be in our theological literature, if the memoirs of Livingstone and Whitefield, of Brainerd and Payson; or if Jonathan Edwards' narrative of the revival at Northampton, or that of Roby and M'Culloch, concerning the work of God at Cambuslang and Kilsyth, were wanting! Brief and scanty as are the records of the Spirit's outpouring at Irvine and Stewartstown, under the ministry of David Dickson; and respecting the awakening at *Antrim* and the *Six Mile Water*, in the days of Blair and Livingstone, they are valuable, not only as illustrating the great truth—which Fleming so clearly and fully exhibits—the “fulfilment of Scripture”—but as affording bright hope for the future fortunes of churches and lands that have been visited by waterings of the Spirit. The Church's experience of the Lord's turning again her captivity, and doing great things for her, inspires joyful confidence for the future. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”* The grand incitement and encouragement to believing effort on the part of God's faithful servants for the rebuilding of Zion, and the diffusion of the truth, is furnished by the Lord's past covenant-dealings with his people—“Be strong, all the people of the land, saith the Lord,

* Psalm cxxvi. 6.

and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.”†

It is a circumstance worthy of particular observation, that in those countries where the profession of Divine truth was ratified, and secured by solemn scriptural vows, true religion has been preserved, and political liberty has been transmitted from one age to another, much better than in places where social covenanting was unknown. Revivals of scriptural principle, too, in our day, have occurred more in the former countries than in the latter. Wherever the covenants entered into were full and scriptural, the effects, both in the preservation of truth and purity in the Church, and in securing civil liberty, have been salutary and abiding. This has been remarkably the case with the Waldenses, in Geneva, and in Britain and Ireland. In those parts of the European Continent, where Scriptural covenants were once publicly taken and sworn, religion and liberty still live, and in our day are rapidly reviving and spreading; whereas in other places, as in the countries where Lutheranism was established, and an imperfect reformation was attained, heresy and corruption have spread, and the precious blessings of evangelical religion and civil freedom are, in a great measure, unknown. Amidst much that is evil yet existing in the churches and political condition of Britain, who can doubt that recent important movements—bringing forth into clearer manifestation the great principles of a martyr-testimony; indicate God’s remembrance of his covenant, and warrant the expectation that yet a more powerful

* Haggai ii. 4, 5.

and extensive revival will distinguish those sections of the Church, and those lands that were formerly renowned for their solemn federal engagements?

The loving remembrance of scriptural vows, and a renewed sense of their obligation—whether by individuals or communities—are themselves a token of returning Divine favour, and hold out the promise of future more abundant blessing. Under the conviction that recent proceedings in one section of the Redeemer's Church in this land, have been the fruits of special goodness; and with the earnest and assured hope that transactions so solemn and joyful will be followed by results of a gracious and permanent character,—not only to those who were immediately concerned in them and their descendants, but likewise to other churches, and to the friends of truth in other lands, the following narrative of Covenant-Renovation is presented to the religious public.

For the benefit of some who are imperfectly acquainted with the doctrine of Covenanting as a scriptural ordinance, and of descending Covenant-obligation—as well as that those who recognize the duty may be prepared to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear,—it appears desirable that a concise view should be first given of the NATURE OF COVENANTING—of the doctrine of descending covenant-obligation—and of the history, contents, and objects of Britain's federal deeds—the Covenants, National and Solemn League. We shall thus be the better prepared to judge of the seasonableness and importance of the recent act of Covenant-renovation, and to appreciate the reasons that serve to render such a duty at the present time especially valuable and advantageous.

SECTION I.

CONDENSED VIEW OF THE NATURE OF COVENANT- ING, AND OF THE DOCTRINE OF DESCENDING FEDERAL OBLIGATION.

THE duty of solemn vowing or covenanting, in certain circumstances, and for important ends, will not be denied by any who admit the supreme authority of the word of God. Indeed, so consonant is the practice to right reason, that men adopt it in the various transactions of human life. Mutual compacts or covenants have been justly said to be “the ligaments of society.” Without such stipulations, and a sense of their continued obligation upon the parties that enter into them, and others that they represent, the affairs of life could not be conducted. All confidence in promises and engagements would be at an end, and society would become utterly disunited and disorganized.

A covenant is a mutual engagement between two parties, implying the performance of certain duties on the one hand, and the fulfilment of promises on the other. In religious covenants, God and his people are the parties. Although, in the latitude of language, a covenant and a vow are sometimes regarded as identical in meaning, there is a distinction between them, simple and easily understood. The latter is an engagement by *one party* only; and in the case of public vows, the persons vowing are severally witnesses of the vows of one another. In a covenant, there is an engagement between two

parties. An oath is a solemn appeal to God, the Searcher of hearts, for the truth and sincerity of the person who makes it. In a religious vow, God is regarded as a Sovereign or Master; in an oath, as a witness and Judge. A covenant engagement may be entered into, with or without the ratification of an oath, though it has been properly said to imply both a vow and an oath. Every genuine believer virtually covenants with God, in his acceptance of Christ, and in the whole work of practical godliness. He takes hold of the covenant of grace—professes his belief in the precious truths of the Scriptures—his dependence upon the promise and grace of the Mediator, and his resolution to walk in the way of holy obedience. This is substantially a *personal covenant*, implied in every act of faith, and expressed more or less explicitly, in all believing prayer. In the pregnant expression of Matthew Henry—“*A life of holiness is a life of renewed acts of self-dedication.*”

A social religious covenant is a joint engagement of a society to perform unitedly certain duties, in cordial dependence upon Divine promises. It is perfectly plain that there is the same warrant for vowing or covenanting in public, as for personal covenanting. The covenanter does nothing in public but what in substance he has frequently done in the privacy of his closet. Even where the covenant is ratified with an oath, there is no greater solemnity in this, than in swearing in relation to other matters. The matter of the oath may be more or less important; but the appeal to God for the sincerity of the juror is the same, and admits of no degrees of solemnity. It is a strange inconsistency in those who are ready to confirm by oath their

declarations about things civil or worldly, to object to the same mode of ratification, in religious promises or engagements. As true religion imports binding ourselves to God, we may naturally expect that a solemn ratification by oath should have a principal place in religious engagements. It is beyond doubt that such a solemnity is a frequent subject of injunction, prediction, and approved example in the inspired word. God's people are said to be characterized by *swearing by his name*. Ancient religious covenants, such as those of Asa and Nehemiah, were ratified by oath. The revival of the Church, and the future conversion of the nations, are represented as intimately connected with religious swearing. "And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory."* The example of the "man after God's own heart," is exhibited for the imitation of the faithful in all ages—"I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."†

In illustration of the nature of covenanting, the following observations may be added:—

First, *All religious covenants are transactions between God and man, and are founded on the covenant of grace.*

God has revealed Himself as the God of mercy, and in virtue of a covenant-transaction between the persons of the Trinity from eternity, as ready to enter into a league of friendship with sinners. In the "counsel of peace," He has condescended to become his people's God, and is prepared to sustain towards them all gracious blessed relations. The covenant of grace is in the hands of the Mediator,

* Jeremiah iv. 2.

† Psalm cxix. 106.

to be administered, and its blessings communicated to all the heirs of salvation. Hence, in all the federal transactions, into which God has called his people to enter, whether as individuals, or communities, Christ Jesus, given as a “covenant for the people,” is to be regarded as the immediate and high contracting party. He reveals the covenant—brings his people into the bond of it—takes their engagement to his service—purges away its impurity with his blood, and by his grace and strength, enables them to walk in all holy obedience. The grand proposal and discovery of the everlasting covenant is in the gracious and all-comprehensive offer—“*I am thy God.*” When this is apprehended and accepted by faith, the individual or society willingly returns the pledge of devoted service—“*Lord, I am thine, O save me.*” He shall say, “It is my people,” and they shall say, “The Lord is my God.”

It was the Mediator of the new covenant that appeared to Abraham on the plains of Mamre; and as He manifested to him his special favour, took from him a virtual engagement to all devoted obedience—“I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect.” “I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”* The same glorious Personage appeared on Mount Sinai, and took Israel into a national covenant with Himself. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people; and all the people answered and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do.”† Here then,

* Genesis xvii. 7.

† Exodus xix. 6—8; Deut. xxvi. 17—19.

are evidently two parties, and a joint engagement, with mutual stipulations—the one, the blessed Mediator, appearing in majesty, and yet in wonderful mercy and condescension,—the other, a people selected from the nations, to be depositaries of Divine truth, and to be incorporated into a holy nation, and a kingdom of priests. A fundamental view of all religious covenants is, that they are based on that covenant which is “ordered in all things and sure,” and that they are in the hand of the Redeemer to prescribe all the matter of the engagement—to accept his people’s dedication, and himself to strengthen them for all right performance of duty. It is this view which exhibits covenanting not only as a solemn duty, but, at the same time, as a very high and ennobling privilege. Those who engage in the covenant must be *voluntary* in the surrender and dedication. It is not, however, optional whether they observe the duty or neglect it. In the day of power, they become a “*willing people*.” They yield themselves to the Lord; and drawn by “cords of love, and bands of a man,” they vow with the whole heart. The covenant thus entered into, is frequently in scripture styled, by way of emphasis, *the Lord’s*. “He hath remembered his covenant.” “Ye shall keep my covenant.” This designation is not used, as if approved covenants, personal or social, were merely of the nature of a law, emanating from the will of a superior, and requiring obedience; but because God’s glory is eminently displayed in the federal engagements of his people, and because Divine power and faithfulness are conspicuously seen in every thing connected with the performance.

2. *A covenant with God may embrace various relations of human life, and a variety of matter,*

and yet it is throughout to be regarded as religious and peculiarly solemn.

Covenanting is throughout an act of Divine worship, involving a direct appeal to God, and a recognition of his gracious presence. The glorious Being with whom we covenant is the infinitely holy and Omniscient Jehovah. The duties which we engage to perform are weighty and important; and the consequences of obedience or neglect are awfully momentous. As individuals, Christians have the warrant to “take hold” of God’s covenant, and to yield themselves to the Lord. Not less incumbent is it upon communities civil or ecclesiastical to devote themselves to God, and to engage unitedly to serve Him. Society may be regarded as a *moral agent*—and as under law to God—the proper subject of moral responsibility—liable to punishment for disobedience and rebellion, and the recipient of rewards in the way of holy obedience. Approved covenants mentioned in Scripture are represented as made with persons in different relations, civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic—as in the instances of covenanting on the plains of Moab, in the last days of Moses, and at Shechem, in the concluding period of the life of Joshua.* Many of the ancient religious covenants were strictly *national*, as at Horeb in the days of Asa, Hezekiah, Jehoiada, and Josiah. Corporate bodies are said, at periods yet future, to confederate together, and join themselves to the Lord—some in a Church capacity, and some in other relations.† There is express Divine approval of covenanting in all these conditions and relations.

The same covenant may embrace engagements

* Deuteronomy xxix.; Joshua xxiv.

† Isaiah xix. 18; Jeremiah l. 5; Zechariah viii. 23; Isaiah lvi.

which respect different relations in life, and may comprehend diversified duties. The persons entering into it occupy different stations—as members of the family—subjects of the commonwealth, and in the fellowship of the Church. Whatever God's law requires them to do in these relations, they may bind themselves in covenant to perform. In all relations, the Christian is bound to act as being under law to God, and with a supreme regard to his glory. Things sacred and civil are intimately and inseparably connected. The state of civil society deeply affects the interests of the Church; while the spiritual welfare of the family and the Church promote the prosperity and blessing of the whole community. It is therefore no valid objection to our fathers' covenants that they were of a *mixed nature*—partly civil and partly ecclesiastical. The ancient covenants, mentioned in Scripture, were of the same character. In the one case, and the other, the glory of God was the great end which the Covenanters had in view. To the advancement of this, all that befel them in providence, all their relations and influence, were subordinated. This stamped with a religious character all that they did or engaged to do. The Divine injunction, “Fear God—Honour the king,” bringing into immediate juxtaposition, duties civil and strictly religious, constitutes a full warrant to embrace in the same religious covenant matters of different kinds—even whatever the law of God enjoins.

3. Religious Covenanting is strictly *moral in its nature—and most needful for the welfare of the Church—and it is therefore a duty always obligatory.*

Vowing or covenanting is a duty founded on the

law of nature, springing from the moral relations which necessarily subsist between God and his rational creatures. The practice can with no propriety be said to be a Jewish peculiarity—as it has nothing in it ceremonial or judicial. It belongs to those ordinances which are enjoined by the moral law, which proclaim God's supreme authority, and man's entire dependence, and moral responsibility. Hence it is a duty proper to every dispensation of revealed religion. Covenanting was practised with Divine approval before the commencement of the Jewish economy, as in the cases of God's covenanting with Noah and Abraham, and of Jacob's vow at Bethel. Nay, even the law of nature dictates vowing as a suitable part of religious worship. The heathen mariners with whom Jonah sailed, “offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and made vows”—and Pagan moralists and historians bear testimony that such a service was acceptable to the gods, and was frequently practised.

Moreover, public vows are needful to the existence, unity, and fellowship of the Church. Organized religious society supposes a confession of faith in Christ, and obedience to Him; and this is equivalent to a solemn religious engagement. Christians are one in their relation to Christ the Head—and this relation becomes visible by an open and full profession. Such a profession—as it was made in primitive times—was in the form of a solemn and explicit vow. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Communion in the Church, whether with God or one another, implies a joint dedication of the members to God, and giving themselves to one another for the performance of all re-

ligious duties.* Covenanting itself is the most affecting expression of communion with God, and of the fellowship of saints. Engaging in it, we have near intercourse with God, as our Father and Portion, and devote ourselves to Him; while, at the same time, by mutual pledges and vows, we animate and encourage one another in all holy obedience. All acts of public or social worship imply solemn vowing. In public prayer we present to God not only the desires of the heart, but also joint resolutions. United praise expresses oneness of mind and affections joyfully declared. An assembly of faithful worshippers is virtually a covenanting assembly. Cordially devoting themselves to God's service is essential to all spiritual worship. They in reality do nothing aright in acts of worship, if they do not present themselves a living sacrifice. Besides, the duties which the members of the Church, and the separate branches of the Church, owe to one another and to the world can only be adequately performed in the way of public vowing. The open avowal and propagation of the truth—the advancement of Christ's cause—the purity and prosperity of the Church—and devoted efforts for the conversion of the world, require the spirit of love to be in vigorous exercise, and demand self-denial, and persevering exertion. Vows to God and to one another inspire mutual confidence, and prompt to holy, sustained action. The truth is best held and advanced by those who feel that they are “standing before the God of the whole earth,” and who can appeal to Him for their sincerity in professing and maintaining it. When the Lord shall build up Zion, and appear to

* See Dr. Owen on “The True Nature of a Gospel Church.”

men in his glory, nations and their rulers assemble *with one accord* to serve God supreme.

4. The duty of covenanting is *expressly and frequently enjoined by God himself*. The first precept of the Moral Law requires an acknowledgement of God as our God, in public and private; and this is equivalent to solemn vowing. All the other commandments of the Decalogue may be shown to imply the same great duty. We are explicitly commanded, "Vow, and pay to the Lord God;" and this is equally enjoined upon communities and individuals.* In the future conversion of the nations, covenanting is represented as being brightly exemplified. Israel and Judah thus became confederate in God's service.† And in connexion with solemn religious vowing, Israel, Egypt, and Assyria are united in a holy profession of the truth, and enjoy special tokens of Divine favour and blessing.‡

5. Religious covenanting *has been exemplified by the faithful in all ages, and by the Church of God in the best periods of her history*. Instead of being *sectarian* in its character, there is no other duty which has been regarded by God's servants as of higher obligation, or from the performance of which greater benefits have been expected. The Church has always been a *covenant-society*; and God's faithful servants have ever esteemed it their highest privilege, by sacred engagements, to avouch the Lord to be their God, and to declare their devotion to his service. Noah, the second father of the human family, immediately after the flood, built an altar, and offered sacrifice, and God gave him the token of his covenant, and swore that there would

* Psa. lxxvi. 11; Deut. x. 20—22; Jer. iv. 2.

† Jer. l. 5.

‡ Isa. xix. 18—end.

be no future universal deluge. The covenant with Abraham was renewed to Isaac and Jacob, and is represented by the Apostle Paul, as the perpetual charter of the visible Church,* and that which the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul. The Church's covenant is substantially the same in all ages—varying only in circumstances, and conditions of special privilege, duty, or trial. It embraces the profession of all truth revealed—obedience to all Divine precepts—faith in the promises—the observance of all Divine ordinances pure and entire,—and the advancement of God's glory throughout the earth. This was the nature of the National Covenant with Israel at Horeb; and the same was the matter of all subsequent renewals recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures—as on the plains of Moab, and in the days of Joshua, Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah.

Though it is not requisite that the practice of covenanting should be enjoined in the New Testament—as being moral in its nature and expressly instituted—it remains in full force, without an explicit abrogation, which we nowhere find in the Scriptures, yet sacred predictions, referring to the new economy, declare the prevalence of solemn vowing, amidst the enlarged privileges of the Church.† Our Lord gives the sanction of his high approval to vowing and swearing in covenant;‡ and the apostles tender their engagement to adherence and devoted obedience to Him, in terms of a solemn vow—“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”§ The Christians at Rome are exhorted to “yield themselves unto God, as

* Gal. iii. 14—18.

† Isa. xix., xlix.; Jer. l.

‡ Mat. v. 17.

§ John vi. 68.

those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God;" and again, to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service."*

The primitive Christian churches certainly practised covenanting, as they were identified with the Church of the former dispensation, distinguished for its federal engagements. The churches of Macedonia—the first planted in Europe—on the occasion of making an extraordinary collection for their poor brethren,—Jewish converts in Judea, "first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to one another by the will of God."† This is represented as the fruit of a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The transaction was not the engagement in making a religious profession, or in sealing ordinances—for such an engagement the apostle naturally expected; but it was something peculiar and worthy of special remark and commendation. Viewed as an act of public vowing or covenanting, as it unquestionably was, it was eminently of Divine approval. It was performed "according to the will of God." Impelled to it by the special influence of the Spirit, the covenanting of these early societies of Gentile converts was laid as the basis of spiritual communion with brethren at a distance, who were of a different stock, and who had indulged undue prejudices against them. It served to give a proper direction to the application of the offerings of Christian liberality. The Macedonian churches dedicated themselves to the Lord, prior to the devotement of their substance. In short, this beautiful example of covenant-dedication—memorable as being the first on record in the primitive

* Rom. vi. 13; xii. 1.

† 2 Cor. viii. 5.

European churches, and among the Gentile converts, exhibited the Church united in the same faith—love abounding—and our Lord's prayer fulfilled—Christians speaking the same things, “perfectly joined together in one heart and one mind.”

Similar instances of federal vowing were frequent and common in the primitive churches. Early ecclesiastical history relates that a Christian profession was at first made by a public declaration of adherence to the fundamental articles of the Church's creed, and by an oath to remain steadfast in the faith. Heathen as well as Christian testimonies bear evidence of this practice. Pliny's celebrated letter to the Emperor Trajan,* expressly states that the Christians residing in Proconsular Asia bound themselves by *solemn oath* to abstain from wickedness, and to practise the duties of godliness and morality. This was the usual practice in the assemblies for worship in the year 107—some ten or twelve years after the death of John, the last of the apostles. The early Christian fathers, in various places, bear clear testimony to the existence of the same practice. Thus Justin Martyr, in his Second Apology, says—“Baptism (meaning the baptism of adult converts) was given only to those who, to the confession of their faith, added a vow to live according

* “They affirmed that the whole of their fault or error lay in this—that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ, as to God, and *bind themselves by an oath*, not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it. When those things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal, which they ate in common without any disorder; but this they had forborne since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your command, I prohibited assemblies.”—*Melmoth's Pliny's Letters*—*Waddington's History of the Church*—p. 10.

to their knowledge.”* Tertullian, speaking against theatrical representations, says—“These things belong to the pomp of the devils, against which we *swore* at the sealing of our creed.” Jerome expressly states that covenanting preceded the rite of baptism—“We enter into covenant with the Sun of righteousness, and swear that we shall serve Him.”

The Churches of Christ that made an evangelical profession both before and posterior to the Reformation, exemplified this great duty. The Waldenses not only emitted a Confession of faith, but in the year 1552, when subjected to cruel persecution, they renewed their testimony, and ratified it by solemn oath. And in 1603, they made still more public their confession, addressing it to all Protestant Churches and States, and engaging before the world, to live in the doctrine of the Scriptures, despite of all loss and suffering. Who can doubt that this covenant was an eminent means of preserving these noble witnesses from being devoured by the Romish Beast, and of transmitting their testimony and heroic achievements to future generations? At the memorable period of the Reformation and afterwards, public covenanting was extensively resorted to, not only for defence and protection, but also as an approved way of securing and transmitting precious truth. The famous League at Smalcald bound the Protestant princes together, and was to them a tower of strength against the Antichristian oppressor. The Senate and people of Geneva covenanted; and the safety of this small State, surrounded as it was by numerous combined and inveterate foes, was owing, not less to the purity of its faith, than to the blessing of Heaven upon its federal engagement.

* Written about A.D. 160.

The reformed churches in Hungary and Transylvania, in Holland and France, all exemplified this scriptural and primitive practice; and the spread of scriptural truth in these countries, and the preservation of the Church, amidst the machinations and oppression of the Papacy, was the fruit of solemn dedication. The "Pilgrim Fathers," who laid the foundation of an extensive Church, and of an "empire of freedom," in the western world, before they landed and entered upon their noble enterprise, engaged in a solemn covenant. This deed, which was several times afterwards renewed, may be regarded as the germ of liberty and greatness, as well as the guarantee for the inheritance of scriptural truth to their descendants. The distinction of the British Churches and nation, arising from their public religious covenants, will be hereafter noticed.

From this hasty sketch, are we not warranted to conclude that the practice of covenanting has the clearest and fullest Divine warrant—that, instead of being sectarian or limited in its observance, it has been practised in all past ages, by all faithful servants of God—and that it has ever characterized the purest churches in their best times, and in periods of special trial and suffering? The most precious benefits, besides, have resulted from the observance of this ordinance. It has been not less an act of religious worship and holy obedience, than a high and honourable privilege—the fruit of peculiar Divine favour. The neglect of this ordinance characterizes individuals and churches, as having forsaken the footsteps of the flock, and indicates decay and declension. Return to it, on the other hand, and the proper exemplification of scriptural covenanting, not only identify us with the Church of

patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, but they will, moreover, be a valuable means of revival. Thus are lands "married to the Lord," and the Church "puts on her beautiful garments," and appears "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

SECTION II.

THE DOCTRINE OF COVENANT-OBLIGATION.

THAT religious covenants have a moral obligation not only upon those who enter into them, but likewise upon those who are represented by them, is susceptible of manifold and most satisfactory proof. The law of nature,—the reiterated declarations of Holy Scripture,—and the practice and universal consent of society fully establish this doctrine.

A brief statement of the doctrine of federal obligation, and a condensed outline of the argument in support of it may suffice to present this subject to the reader.

First of all, The grand and fundamental ground of the obligation of a religious covenant is the *Moral Law*. The law of God alone can bind the conscience. No oath or bond is of any force that is opposed to it. To keep an engagement to do what the Divine law forbids, or to neglect what it requires, renders a person doubly guilty, and is adding sin to sin. The obligation of the law of God is primary and cannot be increased—that of a voluntary oath or engagement is only secondary or subordinate. By the Divine law, we are obliged to the performance of duty whether we choose it or not—by

covenants we voluntarily bind ourselves. Both the light of nature, and the precepts and approved examples of Scripture, as we have shown, warrant the practice of covenanting; and where the vows made respect duties enjoined by the law of God, they have an intrinsic obligation of the highest and most constraining kind. The precepts, examples, and predictions of Scripture exhibit in the clearest manner the moral obligation of this great duty; and as these are presented, both before the introduction of the Jewish Economy, and refer to the times that are subsequent to its abrogation, it is evident that this obligation is not restricted to the Jewish people—but that, like the moral law itself, it respects the whole family of mankind—it is universal and perpetual.

2. But, moreover, religious covenants have an obligation *distinct and peculiar*. Although the authority of God, expressed in his law and speaking through his word, is supreme, and cannot possibly be increased, there may be a *superadded* obligation on a man's conscience to respect and obey this authority, arising from his own voluntary oath or engagement. This is easily illustrated. We are bound at all times to speak the truth, and to fulfil our promises and federal engagements. If an oath is taken to declare the truth, this adds nothing, it is true, to the authority of the law; but it brings the person swearing under an additional obligation to speak the truth. This does not increase the original obligation; and yet it may be properly regarded as a new and different obligation. An oath is enjoined by Divine authority, and cannot therefore be useless. When properly taken, it is important and valuable. Before the oath was taken, if the person deviated

from the truth, he was simply guilty of lying—but afterward, if he speaks falsely, he has added to his sin, the crime of perjury. In the former case, he rebelled against the authority of God—in the latter, he both violates the authority of God, and repugns the obligation of his oath. The usages of all civilized society confirm the doctrine of superadded obligation, arising from oaths and voluntary engagements; and regard perjured persons and covenant-breakers as aggravated criminals. It has been justly observed, that a “Covenant does not bind to any thing additional to what the law of God contains, but it *additionally* binds.”* This superadded obligation of vows, oaths, and covenants is plainly recognized in the Scriptures, (See Numbers xxx. 2; Deut. xxiii. 21; Eccles. v. 4, 5.) Divine threatenings distinctly specify, as a separate ground of punishment, breach of covenant, in addition to the transgression of God’s law.†

3. Public religious covenants have *a descending obligation upon posterity represented in them*. They not only bind the original covenanters, but likewise those whom they represented, till the objects for which they were framed are accomplished. The representative principle runs extensively through all social transactions, and is recognized in every part of the scheme of Divine revelation. Parents represent and engage for their children, not only in certain ordinances of religion, but also in various social transactions. In civil society, men bind their heirs and executors, as well as themselves; and commercial contracts and international compacts are univer-

* “Nature and Obligation of Public Vowing,” by William Symington, D.D.—p. 22.

† Deut. xxxi. 20, 21.

sally admitted to be obligatory upon the descendants of those who framed them, or who first entered into them. To repudiate such an obligation is regarded by all as aggravated unfaithfulness, and as dissolving the bonds of society.

The principle of continued federal obligation is grounded upon an essential characteristic of organized society. This is its *permanent identity*—so that the obligation is not so much *descending*, as resting upon the same body in different stages of its existence. Society is regarded as morally one, during the whole course of its existence, whatever changes may take place in its individual members. It is a *moral agent*—under law to God—the proper subject of reward or punishment. Having thus a permanent character or moral identity, the obligation is continued, so that the society is bound to implement the unfulfilled engagements of the same community in a preceding period. Covenants that are moral in their nature are thus of *perpetual* obligation. Posterity are properly included in them; and in fulfilling federal engagements, it is not so much one class of persons discharging the obligations come under by another, as society, represented by different members, performing its own permanent obligations.

The Scriptures plainly and most fully declare this moral identity of society, and recognise it, in recounting God's dealings with communities, civil and ecclesiastical. The principle is, indeed, essential to the scheme of the Divine government. It is a constitution expressly appointed by God himself. On this ground, Levi is said to have "paid tithes in Abraham," being yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedec met him. The ancient

federal transactions of God's people embraced in them posterity.* The violation of engagements entered into by society many generations before, is rightly charged as a sin upon the same body in subsequent ages. Thus the land of Israel is smitten with famine in the days of David; and the cause is expressly said to be the breach of covenant made in the days of Joshua—*four hundred years before*—with the Gibeonites.† The prophet Jeremiah directly charges upon the Jewish nation in his days, the sin of breaking the covenant made with their fathers; and assigns this as the grand cause of the desolation coming upon the land from the Chaldean invasion.‡ This could only be done on the ground that the national society was the same. Thus too in Hosea, twelfth chapter, in God's covenanting with Jacob at Bethel, "the angel" is said to speak with Israel in the prophet's days. And in Psalm sixty-sixth, the Church existing hundreds of years afterwards is said to rejoice, as if personally present in the deliverance at the Red Sea. The moral identity of communities is evinced by the dispensation of retributive rewards and punishments, in different stages of their existence. As the personal identity of individuals is clearly seen in the rewards of obedience afterwards reaped, and in the punishments inflicted at one period of life for sins committed at another—so it is, too, in organised society. In the Second Commandment, "the iniquity of fathers" is said to be visited on their children to the third and fourth generations, while mercy is shown to "thousands of them that love God and keep his commandments." "The punishment inflicted on one unhappy generation is

* Deuteronomy v. 2; xxix. 14, 15.

† 2 Samuel xxi.

‡ Jeremiah xi. 10.

the penalty, with interest, of the guilt that had been accumulating during all former generations; and this proves that it was one moral agent during the whole period.”* On this ground of the moral identity of communities, and of continued obligation of covenants, the Jewish people, in the era of the Babylonish captivity, are represented as the same society that came out of Egypt: the Amorites; that were extirpated in the wars of Joshua, were punished for crimes that had been accumulating from the infancy of their national existence; and in accordance with our Lord’s denunciation, the vengeance executed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, was the award of sins that were committed throughout succeeding ages, from the earliest period.† Thus, too, the two Apocalyptic witnesses and Antichrist have a continued identity through the prophetic period of 1260 years. The doom threatened in inspired prophecy, and executed upon ancient nations—as Amalek, Egypt, Babylon, Idumea, Moab, Ammon, and Tyre, goes on the principle of their moral identity. For crimes increasing from generation to generation, are they ultimately punished and destroyed. The children walk in the steps of their fathers. “Fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Nations are under law to God. His eyes behold them; and when the measure of their wickedness is full, they become victims of Divine vengeance.

This principle is continually receiving fresh and vivid illustrations in the administration of God’s moral government. Modern nations, such as Spain

* Life of Alexander the Great, in “Family Library”—quoted by White.

† Matthew xxiii. 35.

and France, that persecuted Christ's servants and shed the blood of the saints, have become degraded, or are tossed with revolutions, without hope of recovery or rest. The House of Bourbon, since the days of the perfidious slaughter of the Huguenots, has never sat upon a secure throne, and is now rejected and cast off as abhorred of the nation. The Jewish people, since the days of our Saviour, have been suffering for sins committed during previous ages, and generation after generation, have lain under the fearful malediction which their fathers invoked in shedding the Redeemer's blood.* Their miraculous preservation and their outcast condition shows, on the one hand, that they are still visited for the iniquities of their fathers, and yet intimate that God's designs of mercy are to be accomplished in the national salvation of Israel. The moral identity of the Antichristian system is expressly proclaimed in the infliction of the last plagues which are sent for its destruction. The vengeance that overwhelms mystical Babylon is declared to be the vindication of God's moral government towards her, during the whole course of her existence. "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."† It is retribution the more fearful as it has been long delayed. "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." And it is particularly said to be the avenging of the blood of slaughtered saints.‡

The principle of continued or transmissible federal obligation is not liable to the objections that

* "His blood be upon us and on our children."

† Revelation xviii. 5.

‡ Rev. xviii. 20; xix. 1, 2.

have been urged against it, and is no novelty. We do not make our ancestors a sort of federal heads, as Adam was to the human family, when we allege that posterity are bound by their engagements. This is altogether a misrepresentation of the argument on the subject. The descending obligation of public covenants rests upon the essential character of organized society. It is the same party in different stages of its existence that is bound to moral obedience; and the obligation rests in all its plenitude upon the community as the same moral agent, until the whole matter of the engagement is fulfilled. This principle has been recognized in every age—in things civil as well as ecclesiastical, and may be said to enter as a fundamental element into the laws and usages of society, as well as into matters purely religious, and the affairs of the Church. Compacts, promises, and oaths are universally regarded as binding not only upon those who make them, but likewise upon those whom they lawfully represent, until the object for which they were brought in is attained. Hence covenants of a moral nature continue obligatory long after the original framers have ceased to exist. In public religious vows, God being the one party and the Church or the nation the other, these parties have a continued existence; and notwithstanding the changes that take place in the constituent members of the one party, the obligation is perpetual, inasmuch as the identity of the corporate bodies remains unaltered.

The continued obligation of public religious covenants is highly *beneficial* in its tendency and effects, and supplies some of the most constraining motives to the performance of solemn and important duties.

Believing in this doctrine, faithful men cherish the joyful expectation that *posterity will be secured in the possession of covenant-blessings* as well as themselves; and on the other hand, *posterity are excited and encouraged to confide in the God of their fathers*. The sense of gratitude—one of the most powerful stimulants to obedience is strengthened, while children reflect on the Divine goodness that consulted for their welfare, by embracing them in the same covenant with their ancestors. Thus in the days of primitive Christianity, Peter reminds the Jews, “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers.”* On the same principle, believers, with holy boldness, address God in prayer as their fathers’ God, and plead, “The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us, nor forsake us.”†

Again, It inspires an *assured confidence, and a joyful hope*. God who condescended to take his people into covenant, is their “dwelling-place in all generations”—and His “mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.” There is all ground to hope that He who has been gracious to the fathers in time past will be gracious still to their children. Thus the Jewish Lawgiver encouraged the people in the way of holy obedience—“The Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which He swore unto them.”‡ On the other hand, the sense of continued federal obligation speaks *solemn warning*, and furnishes a *powerful motive to deter from all apostacy and dis-*

* Acts iii. 25.

† Deut. iv. 31.

‡ 1 Kings viii. 57.

obedience. Covenant-violation is ever represented as an aggravated sin, exposing those who commit it to the severest calamities.*

Furthermore, we have here a *powerful and prevailing argument* in prayer. The believer, in the spirit of adoption, pleads—"I am thine, save me." (Psa. cxix. 94.) The Church, in trial and distress, prays, "We are thine; thou never bearest rule over them; they were not called by thy name."† And again, "Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people."‡ Faithful servants of God, like Jeremiah, earnestly supplicate, "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us;"§ and plead for the conversion of the nations—"Have respect unto thy covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."|| Confidence in prayer is inspired, from the consideration that the covenant is a shield for protection and defence of a covenant people in future generations. Thus Israel, even after much wandering and backsliding, is assured—"And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God. But I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God."¶

The remarkable favour shown to Britain, amidst the conflicts and convulsions of European nations, has been well traced to God's special regard to a land

* Levit. xxvi. 25; Deut. xxix. 25; Jer. xi. 1—8. † Isa. lxiii. 19.
‡ Isa. lxiv. 9. § Jer. xiv. 21. || Psa. lxxiv. 20. ¶ Lev. xxvi. 44, 45.

once married to Him in covenant. "It was not the ocean which surrounds us; it was not the number and prowess of our fleets and armies, nor the wisdom of our councils, but the sword of the Lord, and the buckler of his favour that saved us."* Thus, moreover, the *remembrance of the wonderful things that God has done for his people is vividly preserved and transmitted to future generations*. As a primary duty, parents are enjoined to make known to their children God's mighty works; and this is declared to be a principal part of approved thanksgiving.†

Finally, *Federal transmissible obligation eminently displays and promotes the unity of the Church*, and begets a delightful mutual interest between fathers and children. The Church is thus seen to be one in all ages, enjoying the same high covenant privileges, engaged in the same great work, and performing the same duties, and cherishing the same lofty hopes and expectations. Fathers representing their children in covenant, and children recognizing the federal deeds of their ancestors, regard each other with the deepest and most cordial interest. The present generation looks back to the past, as the past anticipates the future. The servants of God feel that they are connected by the tenderest ties with them that have gone before; and they learn too to live for posterity. Thus an eminent public spirit is engendered and strengthened. Distant periods are brought together, and the best interests of different generations and races promoted; while the Redeemer's glory in gathering into one in Himself, a ransomed Church from all nations and ages is eminently advanced.

* Paxton.

† Psa. lxxviii. 4; cxi. 5; 1 Chron. xvi. 12.

SECTION III.

THE BRITISH COVENANTS: THEIR HISTORY—
CONTENTS—USES.

FROM the examples of public social covenanting which have been already adduced, we have seen that the scriptural practice of covenanting characterized the churches of the Reformation in various lands. In none, however, was it so fully adopted as in the British nation, and especially in Scotland. There the reformation attained its brightest development, so that Scotland was at one time justly styled—“Philadelphia among the nations.” Through the singular favour of the Mediator, the Scottish Reformers were led early to confederate together, and to bind themselves by sacred engagements to advance the Divine glory, in promoting true religion. Every succeeding step of reformation was secured and consolidated by renewed federal vows. Thus were our faithful ancestors cemented in godly union, and inspired with strength of purpose and holy energy; and valuable attainments were transmitted to posterity. The Reformation in North Britain has the peculiar distinction of being, in every progressive stage, the *Covenanted Reformation*; and the Church and nation had the high honour of being, in the fullest sense of the terms—“*a covenanted Church and land*.”

Among the first of the federal deeds of our Scottish forefathers was a brief engagement entered into in 1546—eight years after the martyrdom of the youthful Patrick Hamilton—by a few gentlemen who met in Mid-Lothian, and pledged their property, reputation, and life, for the preservation of “Christ’s blessed Evangel.” This was the germ of

the future precious liberties, civil and religious, which, after many a hard struggle, were won for their native country. A few years afterwards, when the adherents of the reformation had considerably increased, a number of solemn engagements for the maintenance of true religion, and for mutual assistance and co-operation were framed, and taken. The first of these was framed in 1556, and subscribed by the friends of the reformation in Mearns. Similar sacred bonds, adapted to the varying circumstances of the reformed, were entered into at Edinburgh in 1557—at Perth in 1559—and at Ayr in 1562. These covenants, though voluntarily and joyfully taken by some of the most distinguished men in the nation, and by persons of different classes, were not enjoined by the supreme authority either of the nation or of the Church, and were properly private deeds; though they proved of singular benefit, in resisting the machinations of Antichrist, and in promoting evangelical truth, and purity of worship.

The vigorous and violent attempts of the enemies of truth to crush the reformation in various countries, taught the Protestants in Scotland, the importance of closer union and more decisive action, in order to preserve their dearly-acquired liberties, and to transmit to posterity the blessings of pure and undefiled religion. The success of Jesuit policy, in arresting the progress of the Reformation on the Continent—the Bartholomew massacre in France,* which was solemnly celebrated at Rome as the de-

* The Bartholomew massacre was celebrated at Rome by a solemn Te Deum, by the order of the Pope; and a medal was struck, with the engraving "Strages Hugonotorum"—the Slaughter of the Huguenots.

struction of Protestantism in that country—and the existence of a league among the Roman Catholic princes and the Pope, to exterminate the reformed faith, served to reveal to faithful men their danger, and to convince them that it was only by a death-struggle, that their privileges and very existence, as witnesses for truth, could be maintained. Every means that the Man of Sin could devise was put in requisition to extirpate evangelical doctrine from Scotland, and to bring back the nation to the bondage of Rome. The Pope was even found to have granted *dispensations* to some of his most devoted servants to profess the reformed religion, for the purpose of undermining and subverting it.

On the accession of James VI. those dangers were greatly increased. The boyish age of the monarch—his subjection to the guidance of unprincipled favourites—the report that the Pope had himself written several letters to the king—and the arrival in Scotland of numbers of Jesuits and seminary priests, with the interception of several letters of dispensation from Rome, excited a just and well-grounded alarm throughout the nation, that a deep-laid plot was hatching to destroy the Reformed faith, and to crush the liberties of Scotland. At this crisis, James, either to remove suspicion from himself and his favourite, or to restore public confidence, requested JOHN CRAIG, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, and his chaplain, to draw up a short Confession of the Reformed Faith, and a Solemn Covenant—which might be publicly taken, as a bond and vow—pledging the nation to determined resistance to the wicked designs of the enemy. This remarkable document was styled “THE SCOTS’ CONFESSION,” and was the NATIONAL COVENANT OF

SCOTLAND in its original form. It contains a full and very explicit abjuration of the corruptions of Popery, both in doctrine and in its superstitious and idolatrous rites, and it disclaimed especially the Pope's usurped authority and his wicked hierarchy. It was, at the same time, a solemn bond of adherence to the doctrine and discipline of the Reformed Church, under promise and oath, "to defend his Majesty's person and authority, with their goods, bodies, and lives, in defence of Christ's Evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies, within the realm or without." This Bond was sworn by the king and his household, on the 20th of January, 1581; and soon afterwards, in consequence of an order of the Privy Council, and an act of the General Assembly, it was taken by persons of all ranks throughout the kingdom. The happy effect of these vigorous measures was to dissipate fear, restore public confidence, and bind the nation in the most solemn manner in firm attachment to the principles of the Reformation. The schemes of enemies were frustrated—the Church was inspired with renewed courage, and the State, as if drawing from the solemn transaction a higher idea of its proper functions as an institution of God for the promotion of his glory, towards the end of the same year, ratified all the former acts in favour of the true religion then professed. Besides its sacred character and object as a religious Bond, the National Covenant must ever be regarded as the grand bulwark of Scottish liberty and independence. "To this much-vilified Bond," says a candid historian, "every Scotchman ought to look with as great reverence as Englishmen do to the Magna Charta. It was what saved the coun-

try from absolute despotism, and to it we may trace back the origin of all the successful efforts made by the inhabitants of Britain, in defence of their freedom, during the succeeding reigns of the Stuarts.”*

The national covenant was renewed in 1590, on the occasion of the deliverance of the country from a threatened Spanish invasion, which was set on foot by the Popish powers to destroy the liberties of Britain. At this period, the General Bond was appended to the covenant; and by order of the council, a commission, to be assisted by *one hundred and thirty* of the nobility and gentry, was given to *ninety-six* ministers, to convene the godly and well-affected of all ranks throughout the kingdom, to administer the covenant and receive signatures. Copies of the original covenant, with the General Bond, were printed and circulated throughout the kingdom, and were cheerfully and generally subscribed.

In the year 1596, another renovation of the national covenant took place, and proved a signal means of revival to the Church and nation. This originated in the General Assembly, on the motion of the venerable John Davidson, minister of Prestonpans. After a solemn public confession of sin, the ministers and elders present, to the number of *four hundred*, with uplifted hands, renewed their covenant with God, “protesting to walk more warily in their ways, and to be more diligent in their charges.” “There have been many days,” says Calderwood, “of humiliation for present judgments and imminent dangers, but the like for sin and defection was never seen since the Reformation.”†

* Alkman's History of Scotland, Vol. III., p. 445.

† Calderwood's History of Church of Scotland—Vol. V. p. 407; Malville's Diary—pp. 222, 228.

The Assembly took measures for engaging the nation generally in the same solemn work. Many of the Synods and Presbyteries, after special preparation, took the covenant, with evident tokens of the Divine presence. In the Synod of Fife, particularly, on the occasion of covenant-renovation, there were manifold tokens of the gracious and powerful presence of the Spirit. Although soon after, severe and long-continued trials befel the Church of Scotland, there can be no doubt that this memorable instance of covenanting served important purposes, in the sovereign designs of Zion's King towards his people. It prevented defection, united the faithful more firmly in the bond of a common brotherhood,—prepared the Church for sifting temptations and trials—and rendered it more difficult for enemies to wrest from her her dearly-bought privileges. The remembrance of the covenant of their God sustained his servants during the long night of their oppressions, and at the darkest hour served to animate them with the joyful hope that the Lord would yet visit the land, and bring back to it his departed glory. The national covenant was not renewed again, except by the Presbytery of St. Andrew's, and the Synod of Lothian, till the year 1638, at the morning-break of the Second Reformation.

The attempts made by James the Sixth, in the latter part of his reign, and persevered in by his son and successor, Charles the First, to force Prelacy upon the nation of Scotland, led to the renovation of the covenant in 1638, and to the introduction of the Second Reformation. The long oppressions arising from the adoption of the *Perth Articles* were followed by yet greater hardships to the faithful; and the introduction of a *Book of Canons*, and

a *Liturgy* for the Church of Scotland, was designed to complete the scheme of Prelatic domination. By the Canons, the whole Presbyterian policy was at once set aside; and the Scottish Liturgy only differed from that of the Episcopal Church in England, by approaching more nearly in various particulars to the Romish Breviary. These changes were made solely by regal authority—and refusal to adopt them was to be visited by summary punishment.

When the spirit of the nation was roused to resist these innovations, and to assert their ancient rights, the happy proposal was adopted to renew the national covenant. After some preparatory measures were taken, it was agreed to make two additions to the original covenant—the one written by ARCHIBALD JOHNSTON, afterwards Lord Warriston, in which numerous acts of Parliament are adduced, to show that the proceedings of the covenanters were constitutional; and the other penned by Alexander Henderson, applying the principles of the covenant against the recent Prelatic innovations. The covenant, thus enlarged, assumed the form in which it is usually printed with the Westminster Confession. The covenant was sworn and subscribed on the 28th February, 1638; and on that and the two following days, no fewer than 60,000 signatures were affixed to it. An old historian describes in suitable terms the conclusion of this eminent work of covenant-renovation:—“With groans and tears streaming down their face, they all lifted up their hands at once. After the oath had been administered, the people were prayerfully enjoined to begin the work of personal reformation. At the conclusion, everybody seemed to feel that a great measure of the Divine presence had accompanied the solemn-

nities of the day; and with their hearts much comforted and strengthened for every duty, the enormous crowd retired about nine o'clock." Copies of the covenant were afterwards sent to all parts of the kingdom; and it was everywhere taken with the utmost cordiality. "The matter was so holy," said the Earl of Rothes, "that they held it to be irreligious to use wicked means for advancing so good a work."

This remarkable instance of covenanting is justly characterized by Henderson and Dickson in their First Reply to the doctors of Aberdeen;—"This was the day of the Lord's power, in which multitudes offered themselves most willingly, like the dew-drops of the morning." And Livingstone, an eye-witness, bears testimony to the solemn impressions and happy effects of the taking of the covenant throughout the kingdom—"I was present at Lanark," says he, "and several other parishes, when on Sabbath after the forenoon's sermon, the covenant was read and sworn; and I may truly say, that in all my lifetime, excepting at the kirk of Shotts, I never saw such motions from the Spirit of God. All the people generally and most willingly concurred. I have seen more than 1000 persons, all at once, lifting up their hands, and the tears falling down from their eyes; so that, throughout the whole land, excepting the professed Papists, and some few who adhered to the prelates, people universally entered into the covenant of God."

The covenant, as taken at this juncture, proved of eminent service to the cause of reformation. It united the nation in one invincible band, and rendered the attempts of enemies abortive. It led to other important steps of reformation, until the scrip-

tural liberties of the nation were secured, and the lovely spectacle was exhibited of a reformed State in friendly conjunction with a Church distinguished for purity, without the one invading the legitimate province of the other. In the year 1639, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland enjoined the taking of the covenant ecclesiastically, and ordained that it should be engrossed in the records of the Church. The Parliament, in 1640, ratified the covenant, and converted it into a standing law of the kingdom, and a test of admission to office. It was placed on the records, with the other Acts of Parliament, and ordained to be publicly read at the opening of every Parliament, before proceeding to business, and to be sworn by every member, upon pain of forfeiting his seat. All judges, magistrates, and other state officers, were required to swear and subscribe the covenant, before entering upon office. In the year 1649, the Scottish estates enacted that the king should, as a part of his coronation oath, declare his approval of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, and his obligation in his high station to prosecute the ends thereof. Accordingly, Charles Second, at his coronation at Scone, swore and subscribed the covenant, though his life afterwards afforded sad evidence of his complicated perfidy.

It thus appears that the National Covenant is to be properly regarded as, in the fullest sense, the federal deed of the nation. It was embodied in the constitution, and became, in truth, an essential part of it. At the time in which it was taken, and afterwards, it was everywhere regarded as the Magna Charta of the civil and religious liberties of Scotland. It restrained the power of the sovereign within constitu-

tional limits, and taught the people just views of their rights and liberties; and its grand excellence consisted in settling the whole on a scriptural foundation. The English patriots assumed it as the basis of the solemn league and covenant. It served to unite the hearts and concentrate the efforts of friends of liberty throughout the three kingdoms. It originated the admirable measures of the Long Parliament, and was, in truth, the groundwork of the Second Reformation—the influence of which will be yet felt in Britain, and in other lands, in the future revival and triumph of evangelical religion and genuine liberty.

An eminent French statesman and historian says of the Westminster Assembly, whose existence and measures may evidently be traced to the national covenant—"It founded the power of the Commons, and caused English society to take a wide step from the monstrous inequality of the feudal system."* It has been ably shown too, that the expression of the principal parts of the American "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE" was taken from the articles of the national covenant.† So that the two great nations in the world, where true religion and civil liberty are most flourishing, are indebted to the national covenant for all that constitutes the main elements of their greatness and prosperity. The taking of the covenant at the close of the Second Reformation was closely connected with the passing of the "Act of Classes," by which irreligious men, and the enemies of the Reformation were excluded from places of power and trust in the nation,—the renewed approval of the Second Book of Discipline, and the aboli-

* Guizot's "History of the English Revolution."

† Dr. Smyth on "The Mecklenburg Declaration."

tion of patronage. The aim of these measures was, according to the statement of an excellent historian, "The construction of what the world has never yet seen—a Christian Government, composed of men whose ruling principle should be to fear God and honour the King."*

The obligation of this venerable deed rests mainly upon its moral and scriptural principles, and is independent of the conduct of the covenanters. Although it is believed that the character and measures of the leading reformers in Scotland, at the memorable period of the Second Reformation, will advantageously compare with those of the patriots of any other age or country, we are not required to approve of every thing, either in the one or the other, in maintaining that the covenant is of perpetual moral obligation. It was in full accordance with the precepts and examples of God's word—and it cannot be shown to be intolerant and persecuting in its principles—nor can the conduct of those who employed it as an instrument for establishing and protecting the liberties, civil and religious, of the nation be shown to be illegal and rebellious, without impeaching the wisdom and authority of God speaking in the oracles of truth, and without denying to a nation the right of throwing off the yoke of oppression, and securing for itself true rational liberty. Beyond any dispute, this covenant was in the highest sense *national*—and to it, in a great measure, the Scottish people owe their high distinction among the nations. In adopting it, as the foundation of their dearest rights, and the bulwark of their liberties, they set an example to other countries, which, we cannot doubt, will be yet extensively followed in the

days when all lands shall bow down to the sceptre of Prince Messiah.

THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.

The Solemn League and Covenant owes its origin to the earnest struggles of the spirit of religious freedom against error and arbitrary power. At a period of no ordinary peril to the cause of true religion, and to the liberties and civil rights of Britain, was it framed; and the impartial verdict of historians of very different views is, that to this admirable Bond we owe the deliverance of the nation from imminent dangers, and that through it the blessings of civil and religious liberty have been transmitted as a precious inheritance to an ungrateful posterity.

In the civil war between Charles First and the English Parliament, in the early part of the year 1643, the king had generally been successful in his military operations, and the affairs of the Parliament had been reduced to a critical and dangerous position. Had the Scottish nation thrown its weight at this crisis into the royal cause, there can be little doubt that the monarch would have triumphed over the liberties of his English subjects, and accomplished his darling project of establishing arbitrary power and perpetuating Prelatic domination. At this eventful time, the Westminster Assembly had convened, at the call of the Long Parliament, to devise measures for a thorough reformation of religion, but, at first, they made little progress. Sensible of this, the Divines petitioned both Houses of Parliament to appoint a day of public fasting and humiliation, that "every one might bitterly bewail his own sins, and cry mightily to God, for Christ's sake, to remove his wrath, and heal the land." And they

entreat the rulers, moreover, “instantly to take into their most serious consideration how they may more speedily set up Christ more gloriously, in all his ordinances, within the kingdom, and reform all things amiss throughout the land, wherein God is more specially and more immediately dishonoured.” The Westminster Assembly, and the Long Parliament, actuated by such feelings, sent commissioners to the Scottish Parliament, and to the General Assembly then sitting—the one to obtain the aid of the Scottish nation in conducting the war against the king, and the other to solicit assistance in prosecuting the work of reformation. In the Letter from the Westminster Assembly, the following moving expressions occur:—“The Kingdom of England is in a deplorable condition—on the edge of a most desperate precipice, ready to be swallowed up by Satan and his instruments. Great is the cruelty of their enemies against such as fall into their hands, being armed against them, not only as men, but as Christians, as Protestants, and as reformers; and if they are given up to their rage, the safety of all Protestant Churches will be endangered.” And they add —“In a deeper sense of this danger, than we can express, we address you, in the bowels of Christ, for your most fervent prayers, and advice, what farther to do for the making of our own and the kingdom’s peace with God, and for the uniting of the Protestant party more firmly, that we may all serve God with one consent, and stand up against Antichrist as one man.”*

Alexander Henderson presided at this meeting of

* The Delegates from the Parliament were Sir Harry Vane, Sir William Armour, and Messrs. Hatcher and Darley; those of the Westminster Assembly were the Rev. Stephen Marshall, a Presbyterian, and Rev. Philip Nye, an Independent.

the General Assembly. The response to the application from the English Commissioners was the proposal that a mutual Bond should be drawn up, stating the grounds on which assistance should be rendered, and the two nations co-operate in the struggle for liberty.* The English Commissioners only contemplated a civil league, but as the entire contest in Scotland had been of a religious character, and had been conducted to a prosperous issue, principally by means of the national covenant, it was insisted by both the Convention of Estates and the General Assembly, that the proposed league should be of a religious nature. On the suggestion of Sir Harry Vane, the bond of union between the two kingdoms was framed, so as to embrace both ideas, and to be partly religious and partly civil. The preparation of the Bond was entrusted to Alexander Henderson; and when on the 17th of August, the draught of the Solemn League and Covenant was submitted to the General Assembly, it was adopted unanimously, amidst the applause of some, and the bursting tears of joy of others. The covenant was then transmitted to the English Parliament and the Westminster Assembly; and being, with some slight alterations, approved by them, it was appointed to be taken on the 25th of September. On that memorable day, the members of the House of Commons, with the Assembly of Divines, and the Scottish Commissioners, met in the Church of St. Margaret's, Westminster. The Rev. Mr. White, of Dorchester, one of the Assessors, commenced with prayer. Alexander Henderson and Mr. Nye afterwards addressed the assembly, justifying from Scripture the practice of covenanting, and showing its mani-

* Baillie's Letters—Vol. I. pp. 364, 365.

fold advantages to the Church in all ages. Mr. Nye then read the Covenant from the pulpit slowly, and aloud, pausing at the end of each article, while the whole audience of statesmen and divines stood up reverently to worship, and with uplifted hands swore to its performance. After prayer, at the close, the members of the House of Commons subscribed their names to the covenant in one roll of parchment, and the Assembly of Divines in another.* The covenant was taken by the House of Lords, on the 15th of October, after a sermon by Dr. Temple, from Nehemiah x. 29, and an exhortation by Mr. Coleman. On the following Lord's day, it was also taken by the congregations in and around London. In the month of February following, the Parliament ordained that the covenant should be taken throughout the kingdom of England, by all persons, who had sufficient knowledge, above the age of eighteen years. This order was accompanied by a suitable Exhortation of the Westminster Assembly. Both were sent to military officers, that it might be taken by the soldiers under their command—to governors of towns and garrisons—to committees of Parliament in the several counties, and to ministers and churchwardens, that it might be read and explained to the people. It was ordered to be publicly read in every church and congregation in the kingdom, on every day of public fasting and humiliation. English Protestants residing in foreign countries were invited to join with their brethren in England in this sacred league; and not only they, but also

* It is stated by Rushworth ("Historical Collections"—Vol. V. pp. 480, 481), that this roll was subscribed by 228 members of the House of Commons, whose names are given—among these appears the name of Oliver Cromwell.

some of the Continental Churches expressed their readiness to comply with this invitation. These orders did not require the power of public authority to enforce them; as it is acknowledged, even by historians unfriendly to the principles of the covenant, that “the great majority of the religious part of the nation were zealous for the covenant.”

In Scotland, the Solemn League and Covenant was received with the highest approval, and cordial unanimity. The General Assembly, in the Act adopting it, say—“With all their hearts, and with one voice, they approve and embrace the same, as the most powerful means, by the blessing of God, for settling and preserving the true Protestant religion, with perfect peace in His Majesty’s dominions, and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing His Majesty’s throne to all ages and generations.” Printed copies were sent to the moderator of every presbytery; and it was ordered that it should be received and explained on the Sabbath, and then, on a subsequent Sabbath, tendered to the people. Throughout the kingdom, it was everywhere received with fasting and prayer, and embraced with the utmost unanimity. In 1644, it was ratified by act of Parliament; and it was again renewed in Scotland, by all ranks, at the close of the Second Reformation, with an Acknowledgment of sins, and Engagement to duties, in 1648, and by the Scottish Parliament in 1649.

As the Solemn League and Covenant was designed to be a Bond of union, and the basis of the reformation of religion in the Three Kingdoms, provision was made that it should be taken by the Protestants in Ireland, in conjunction with their brethren in England and Scotland. In 1644, it was very generally adminis-

tered throughout the North of Ireland, by four ministers, who were deputed for this purpose by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. No constraint was anywhere employed. The officers, soldiers, and people generally, welcomed the covenant as a happy instrument of revival, and fraternal confidence. It was carefully explained to them before they were admitted to swear it. Some were held back, till they had obtained more knowledge; and the only complaint was, that ministers were "over-scrupulous" in admitting persons to subscribe. A cotemporary writer* says—"The covenant was taken in all places with great affection; partly sorrow for former judgments, and sins and miseries; partly joy, in the hopes of laying a foundation for the work of God in the land, and overthrowing Popery and Prelacy, which had been the havoc and ruin of that poor church. Sighs and tears were joined together. Indeed, they were assisted with more than the ordinary presence of God in that work in every place they went to, so that all the hearers did bear them witness that God was with them. Yea, even the malignants, who were against the covenant, durst not appear on the contrary; for the people generally held these ministers as servants of God, and coming with a blessed message and reward to them."

The Solemn League and Covenant has been greatly misrepresented and vilified. Notwithstanding, it may justly be termed, in the words of an excellent historian—"A document the noblest, in its essential nature and principles, of all that are recorded among the international transactions of the world." When captious objections have been raised against it, adopted often without inquiry, and handed down

* Adair, in his MSS. History.

even to our own times, and while it has been represented as premature, we agree with the same judicious writer, when he characterizes it "as the wisest, sublimest, and most sacred document ever framed by uninspired men;" and with him we may ask—"Has it perished amid the strife of tongues? Has it sunk into oblivion, and ceased to be a living element in the quick realms of thought? Are there none by whom it is still regarded with sacred veneration? Is it not true, that at this very moment, there are many minds of great power and energy earnestly engaged in reviving its mighty principles, and fearlessly holding them forth before the world's startled gaze? And if such be the case, may it not be, that what two hundred years ago was premature, has now nearly reached the period of its full maturity, and is on the point of raising up its sacred and majestic hand, strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."*

Rejoicing in the prospect of this revival of the principles of the Solemn League, and believing that "the period of its full maturity" is not far distant, we present a brief view of its contents and leading objects:—

The Solemn League consists of a Preface, Six Articles, and a Conclusion. Article First, consists of three Clauses. 1. An engagement to maintain the reformation already reached in the Church of Scotland. 2. To endeavour "the reformation of the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches. And 3. They engage that they "shall

* Hetherington's "History of the Westminster Assembly"—pp. 133, 134.

endeavour to bring the Churches of God in the Three Kingdoms, to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion." The importance of this Article must be admitted by all who value evangelical doctrine and scriptural order. The Church of Scotland had attained to eminent purity in faith and worship. In England, on the other hand, the Reformation had been arrested in its progress, and the Church in its ritual and formulas exhibited many evidences of corruption. It was surely of vital consequence to reform the Churches in Britain, according to the pattern of the Divine word; and to unite them in one harmonious body, was an undertaking worthy of men of large hearts and sanctified intellects.

Article II. engages those who take it to "engage—without respect of persons, to endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." From this clause, the gravest objections have been brought against the covenant. It has been represented as involving intolerant and persecuting principles; and those who acknowledge its obligation have been exhibited as cherishing the most odious spirit. The least candid consideration of the document itself is sufficient to show the groundlessness of these allegations. Evidently this covenant binds us to labour to extirpate *unscriptural systems and evil practices*, and not persons. The term itself does not imply that the covenanters are to have recourse to violent means to accomplish the ends proposed. Our Saviour declared that "every plant which his Heavenly Father had not planted should be rooted out" (extirpated). And every Christian must regard himself as solemnly bound to

labour by all proper means to co-operate in this design. All will admit that it is the Church's duty to endeavour to root out all superstition, heresy, schism, and profaneness. And if Popery and Prelacy are, as every Presbyterian must believe, without warrant in the word of God, they are not of God's planting, and therefore it is equally incumbent to seek their extirpation. In the "exhortation of the Westminster Assembly" to the taking of the Solemn League—when referring to this clause, the Divines assert, "Nor is any man hereby bound to offer violence to their persons, but only in his place and calling to endeavour their extirpation in a lawful way." To wrest this passage as warranting of persecution is plainly to attach to it a meaning which the words do not warrant, in opposition to the express declaration of the covenanters themselves. The conduct of those who framed and first took the covenant, while the supreme power of the nation was in their hands, affords ample proof that they were far from being actuated by the principles or spirit of persecution. None suffered at their hands, in person or property, merely on a religious account. The means employed for extirpating error and profaneness were moral and scriptural. Though themselves hated, vilified and persecuted, our forefathers never persecuted.

Article III. is an engagement to maintain the rights and liberties of the parliament, and the "King's Majesty's person and authority, in preservation and defence of true religion and liberties of the kingdom." This clause is a full refutation of the stale and oft-repeated slander, that the covenanters were men of extravagant principles. It shows them to have been actuated by the purest patriotism. The

preservation of true religion and scriptural liberty was their principal aim. Their allegiance to the sovereign was limited and regulated by a fervent regard to the liberties and best interests of the nation. The Covenant plainly inculcates the doctrine—which is fundamental to British freedom—that when the monarch violates the original compact, and tramples on the constitutional rights of his subjects, the sovereign power reverts to the people. Both the ruler and the ruled are to be guided by a paramount regard to the defence and promotion of true religion.

Article IV. engages the covenanters—"With all faithfulness, to endeavour the discovery and punishment of incendiaries and malignants, in an orderly and legal manner," &c. This article was evidently of a temporary nature, though the principle involved in it is susceptible of application to other times and circumstances. For a number of years before the Covenant was framed, a numerous party, significantly termed **MALIGNANTS**,* had, under high pretences of zeal for the Church, introduced unscriptural and antichristian innovations, and had imposed them by severe civil penalties on the consciences of their brethren. They professed devoted loyalty, and urged forward the most arbitrary and unconstitutional measures of the government, and they assiduously sowed suspicions and dissensions between the king and his most faithful subjects. To oppose

* The celebrated George Gillespie—the most eloquent of the Scottish Commissioners who attended the Westminster Assembly—left a dying testimony against the admission of Malignants to places of power and trust in the nation. An able tractate from his pen, written against "Association with Malignants," is among his collected works; it may be safely affirmed respecting it, that for scriptural argument, and calm, logical reasoning, it is not surpassed by any of the controversial pieces of that period. The principles which it advocates are, in all ages, an essential part of a faithful testimony for truth.

and punish such persons was evidently a sacred duty—as their presence and counsels about the throne were the grand obstacles to the establishment of constitutional freedom. They were, in truth, inveterate enemies to both their king and country; and as such were certainly deserving of punishment. Proverbs xxv. 6—“*Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.*”

Article V. contains an engagement of the covenanters to “endeavour according to their place and interest that the kingdoms may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity.” The object of a former article was to effect the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion in the Church—this is an engagement to secure and perpetuate peace on a solid basis to these nations in their civil capacity. The Solemn League was thus a treaty of union between the three kingdoms, promoting their mutual interests and common prosperity. When we contemplate the broad and scriptural basis on which this confederation was founded, we cannot doubt that had it been adhered to, jarring elements had long since disappeared, and the blessings of firm concord, and a happy peace would have been attained, and become permanent.

The Sixth Article pledges those who take the covenant to mutual defence, fraternal union and mutual assistance, and the advancement of the principles of the covenant. The Conclusion is an engagement to all godly practice, with a solemn appeal to God as the Searcher of hearts for the sincerity of the covenanters. It need not be shown how important is this part of the vow to all who desire the prevalence of pure and undefiled religion.

Our illustrious ancestors did not regard the articles of the Covenant merely as principles to be professed. They viewed them as worthy to be promoted by devoted and sustained action—as entitled to have all sacrifices made for their universal diffusion—and to be embodied in all holy and exemplary living. Such should still be the evidence of sincerity and devotedness which those who embrace the covenant should present to the world. Great principles thus professed and reduced to practice become the seed of a future glorious harvest. *“They that come of Jacob shall take root, and bud, and blossom, and fill the face of the world with fruit.”*

From this brief view of the contents of the Solemn League and Covenant, the grand OBJECTS of this celebrated instrument may be readily gathered.

It was, first of all, a Sacred Bond *for the safety and preservation of those who engaged in it, and of all that they hold most dear and valuable.* In the preamble to the League, the framers refer to plots, and conspiracies of the enemies of the Reformation; and declare that they enter into the covenant for “the preservation of themselves, and their religion, from utter ruin and destruction.” That this was no idle alarm, the history of those times bears ample testimony. The spirit of Popery actuated the court. The fruits of Jesuit policy were seen in the forcible suppression of Protestantism, and the slaughter of Protestants in many parts of the continent. The Gunpowder treason in England, and the Irish Massacre had but recently occurred. It was therefore a justifiable and necessary measure of self-preservation for the covenanters to protect themselves, and even to aim at the extirpation of a system which authorized such treacherous and sanguinary proceedings.

Even the stringent regulations concerning the taking of the covenant were rendered necessary, as a means of preservation from the bloody plots of papists, and the abettors of arbitrary power. History testifies that a plot for the universal massacre of the heads of the covenanters, by the high royalist party, had been deliberately framed, but was defeated for want of concert, or from jealousy and mistrust among the principal actors.*

The Solemn League was, moreover, *a standard displayed for the defence and preservation of civil and religious liberty*. Never were the grand principles of constitutional liberty more plainly and fully declared; and the just limits of the power of rulers and the rights of the people more clearly exhibited, than in this admirable instrument. The men who framed and entered into this Bond, were neither anti-government in their principles, nor opposed to legitimate monarchy. Theirs was a loyalty not blind or fitful, but enlightened and scriptural. They believed that both rulers and people are under God's authority, and are responsible to Him for the exercise of their respective functions,—whether in setting up rulers, or in exercising political power. The Third Article of the Solemn League plainly implies that the people have a right to appoint rulers, and prescribe the conditions of government, according to the will of God; that no rulers should be chosen who are not friendly to true religion; and that the supreme ruler is bound to respect and maintain the constitutional liberties of the nation. Civil liberty was regarded as founded on and inseparable from religious purity and freedom; and the basis of both was declared to be the word of God. The king was

* Alkman's History of Scotland—Vol. IV. pp. 126, 127.

to be amenable to the authority of the enthroned Mediator; while the subjection and civil duties of the people were to be regulated in accordance with his revealed will. In these fundamental principles, so briefly but yet so clearly enunciated, are contained the germs of all true and permanent liberty; and it is not too much to say, that to the Solemn League and Covenant, Britain and America are largely indebted for the constitutional freedom which they possess above other nations.

2. Another grand object proposed in the Solemn League and covenant was the *extension of Reformation*. It was an instrument at once for revival in the Church, and for the propagation of true religion throughout the world. Long prior to the era of modern missions, it recognized the paramount duty of Christians to make known God's "light and salvation" throughout the nations, and was a sacred confederacy formed by devoted men for the universal establishment of the Saviour's kingdom. The reformation that had been happily attained in Scotland, the covenanters earnestly sought to extend to England and Ireland. Alexander Henderson, in the noble designs of his capacious and catholic spirit, contemplated proposing the Solemn League as a means of union and propagation of truth to the reformed States and Churches on the Continent; and some of the latter signified their readiness to enter formally into the vow of God. Had this admirable project been accomplished, what a different moral and religious aspect would European nations present from what they now exhibit! Popery and its innumerable attendant evils—ignorance, superstition, oppression and immorality—would have been banished from this quarter of the globe. Britain itself, illuminated

with gospel truth, would have been the centre of light to other nations, and from it would have "sounded out the word" of God to remote regions. May not this admirable instrument be destined yet to be a valuable means for promoting the great missionary enterprise? So soon as the principles of the Solemn League and Covenant shall have been properly appreciated, and its obligation felt—the propagation of true religion at home, and the conversion of the world, will appear a matter of paramount importance, and will call forth the sanctified energies of the Church, to a far larger extent than we have yet witnessed.

3. The Solemn League and Covenant was designed *to promote union and uniformity* among the friends of truth. The importance of these objects cannot be overrated. Union on a scriptural basis is most valuable; and union, to be permanent, and productive of its full happy fruits, must be sought in the way of uniformity, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government in the Church. The primitive Church was thus distinguished, for they were "of one heart and of one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." Inspired prophecy, moreover, assures us that this shall be characteristic of future times. "The Lord shall be King over all the earth. There shall be one Lord, and his name one." The article in the covenant respecting union is strikingly and beautifully expressed. "We shall endeavour," declare the covenanters, "to bring the Churches of God in the Three Kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of Church government, directory for worship and catechizing—that we and our posterity after us, may,

as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us." There never was a more comprehensive basis of union than that which was thus presented to the Churches. The Solemn League and Covenant did, for a season, unite the friends of truth in the bond of a holy brotherhood; and, under the Divine blessing, it may do so again. While other schemes of union, in which truth is compromised, and in which there is no provision made for promoting purity of worship and ordinances, must prove abortive, this will be lasting, and productive of the most salutary results.

4. *The removal of Prelacy and numerous evils connected with it*, was another distinct object of the Solemn League. Our forefathers conscientiously believed that the system of Prelacy, as established in England, and attempted to be forced upon the people of Scotland, was destitute of scripture warrant, oppressive, and hostile to the interests of true religion. The Parliament that convened the Westminster Assembly, in both Houses, had condemned Prelacy, as "an evil justly offensive, and burdensome to the kingdom,—a great impediment to the growth of religion—and very prejudicial to the state and government of the kingdom." The Solemn League embodied the nation's protest against what had obstructed the progress of reformation, and had been found oppressive to faithful men. If such are the fruits of Prelacy—and if, as some distinguished Prelatists themselves have declared,* Diocesan episcopacy is unknown in the New Testament, and had no existence in the Christian Church for the *first three hundred years*, who will say that our forefathers were wrong in abjuring it in the covenant, and in seeking its extirpation?

* Archbishop Whately.

Lastly, The Solemn League was designed to be *an eminent means for promoting practical godliness*. In the conclusion, the covenanters declare —“their true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour, for themselves, and for all others under their power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties they owe to God and man, to amend their lives, and each one to go before another, in the example of a real reformation.” Such were the noble ends of our fathers’ covenant—ends in which the glory of God, and the interests of true religion, and genuine morality, were deeply concerned. If such objects are distinctly proposed in the Divine word, and are of the highest value to communities and individuals, we may surely conclude that the principles and obligation of the covenant are morally unalterable; and we are, besides, warranted to expect, that, in a day of approaching revival, these will be universally acknowledged.

The view of this admirable document presented by an excellent historian is just, as it is eloquently expressed.

“It is difficult to conceive how any calm, unprejudiced, thoughtful and religious man can peruse this very solemn document, without feeling upon his mind, an overawing sense of its sublimity and sacredness. The most important of man’s interests for time and for eternity are included within its ample scope, and made the subjects of a Solemn League with each other, and a sacred covenant with God. Religious liberty and peace are the grand elements of human welfare, to the preservation of which it bound the empire; and as those by whom it was framed knew well that there can be no safety for those in a land where the minds of the community

are dark with ignorance, warped by superstition, misled by error, and degraded by tyranny, civil and ecclesiastical, they pledged themselves to seek the extirpation of these pernicious evils. . . . Aware, alas! how often the wisest and best schemes are perverted and destroyed by base intrigues of selfish and designing men, the covenanters solemnly pledged themselves to each other and to God, not to suffer themselves to be divided, or withdrawn from the constant and persevering prosecution of their great and sacred cause, till its triumph should be secured, or their own lives terminated. In this strong resolution, were involved a lofty singleness of purpose, deliberate determination, and not only self-denial, but, if necessary, self-sacrifice, that to the world a great example might be given for better times to follow, and to realize.” *

SECTION IV.

THE CONTINUED OBLIGATION AND RENEWAL OF THE BRITISH COVENANTS.

FROM the historical view we have given of the Covenants National and Solemn League, it must appear manifest that they are *national covenants*—eminently seasonable, and comprehensive—and that their adoption as public instruments of revival and reformation was productive of most beneficial results. If the doctrine which has been already advanced concerning the moral identity of nations be true,—and we are satisfied that it rests on grounds at once rational and scriptural, then these memorable

* Hetherington's History of Westminster Assembly.—pp. 132, 133.

deeds must be regarded as being of permanent obligation. They were certainly lawful and scriptural as to their matter; they were entered into at a seasonable time; the objects which they contemplated were of the highest importance, both in respect to the promotion of the Divine glory, and to the best interests of the Church and nation; and there were special tokens of the Divine approval upon the proceedings which were consequent upon their introduction.

The British covenants are of continued obligation.

First of all,—Because the *MATTER* of them is *moral* and *scriptural*, and therefore worthy to be prosecuted in all ages. The intrinsic obligation to present the same testimony for truth, and to seek alike deliverance from the evils specified in the covenants of our fathers, devolves with equal right upon us as upon them. Till the great ends of these deeds shall have been fully attained, they lay each succeeding generation professing Christ's truths, and acknowledging the authority of his word, under obligation to labour for their accomplishment. On the ground of the moral character of our fathers' federal deeds, they may be regarded as, in some sort, obligatory upon other Churches and nations, besides those that can trace their descent directly from the original covenanters. And certainly, those who have sprung from the same stock, and who in America, or in the distant colonial dependencies of Britain, owe much of the scriptural light and freedom which they enjoy to the principles developed in the sacred vows of Britain, and to the blessing that has remarkably rested upon a nation, which was married to the Lord, have peculiar reasons to view these covenants as worthy of all admiration, and devoted regard.

But, Secondly, and chiefly,—These covenants were strictly NATIONAL DEEDS, and on this ground they are of perpetual obligation upon the British nation. The supreme authorities in Church and State entered into them—the people of all ranks willingly and joyfully came under the engagement. They became part of the fundamental compact between the ruler and the subject; and were assumed, after solemn and careful deliberation, not only as the ground of international union, and mutual protection and intercourse, but likewise as the basis of national legislation and administration. If the British nation be morally the same society that came under these engagements, then it is certainly yet bound to carry out the ends which they proposed, and that until these shall have been fully attained. If righteous laws bind posterity—if oaths are binding—if bonds oblige heirs—if compacts are of force while the national society exists,—then assuredly the British covenants have a continued obligation, and that of a higher and more sacred character than any laws and compacts which pertain merely to worldly interests and relations. A treaty about war or peace or commerce continues to bind, and it must surely be much more binding when its object is religion. The engagements of rulers to a people, or of a people to their rulers—as in the Magna Charta, and the Bill of Rights,—are held to be of fundamental, permanent obligation; and certainly, the covenant by which both rulers and people are not only mutually bound to one another, but also to Him who is moral Governor of the nations, and Prince of the kings of the earth, can plead a still higher obligation. It is universally admitted that a righteous league between nation and nation is binding; and while the breach

of international treaties is held to be perfidious and criminal, is there not aggravated sin in a nation breaking its covenant with God? Before the permanent obligation of the British Covenants can be set aside, objectors will require to shew that the nation is not possessed of a permanent moral identity—or, admitting this, that it is not still bound by its own just engagements. But such an identity and obligation can only be denied by repudiating, at the same time, all public faith, and by maintaining that no bonds or treaties whatever bind posterity. Few, it is presumed, are prepared to maintain a position that would evidently disorganize society, and destroy all public confidence. Those who, in our day, are most ready to repudiate the obligation of our fathers' sacred covenants, can strenuously plead for the continued obligation of engagements about matters of civil or worldly interest, and would vehemently resist as opposed to all right reason, and a daring violation of public faith, the repudiation of the National Debt—of the Habeas Corpus Act, or of the compact of the British nation with the House of Hanover.

The allegation that the Covenants, National and Solemn League, were rejected by the nation at the Restoration, by the Act Rescissory, and that they have ceased to be obligatory—on the principle that the authority which enacted a law, may afterwards repeal it, is of no weight with those who consider properly the circumstances of the case, or who have due regard to Scriptural precedent. In the covenants of our illustrious forefathers, the exalted Mediator—the Head of the nation, was one of the contracting parties; and He can never give to a people a right to dispense with the obligation of solemn du-

ties enjoined in his word. The apostacies of ancient Israel and the enactments of wicked princes did not set aside the obligation of the National Covenant, which God repeatedly styles *his*—the breach of which, too, inspired prophets frequently and expressly ascribe as the grand cause of national judgments. The existence of national sins necessarily implies that a people are implicated in the guilt of their forefathers, and that they are bound too, by their federal engagements. Few, it is presumed, will venture to carry out to its legitimate consequences the principle of the objection; and assert not only that the British Covenants are not binding, but likewise that no such public federal deeds are of continued obligation. This can only be attempted by a denial, or utter perversion of the many scriptural declarations, in which the permanent obligation of national covenants is declared or plainly inferred.

TESTIMONIES IN FAVOUR OF THE CONTINUED OBLIGATION OF THE BRITISH COVENANTS.

The doctrine of the continued obligation of the British Covenants has been maintained and inculcated by many of the most distinguished servants of God in these countries, from the period that they were first framed, down to the present time. Our venerable ancestors—the Reformers and Martyrs of the seventeenth century,—explicitly avouched this sentiment, and declared their adherence to it, in the most solemn circumstances. The Solemn League itself asserts its lasting obligation. The Covenanters declare themselves bound to endeavour that the nations may “remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity.” (Fifth Article). The General Assembly that proposed and adopted the Solemn

League, in their Act of August 17th, 1643, declare the covenant to be “the most powerful means, by the blessing of God, for settling and preserving the Protestant religion with perfect peace in his Majesty’s dominions, and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his Majesty’s throne to all ages and generations.”

On the last occasion, too, of the national renewal of the Solemn League in Scotland, the General Assembly in its “SEASONABLE AND NECESSARY WARNING,” dated July 27th, 1649, strongly asserts its paramount obligation—“Albeit the League and Covenant be despised by that prevailing party in England, and the work of uniformity, through the retardments and obstructions that have come in the way, be almost forgotten by these kingdoms, yet the obligation of that Covenant is perpetual; and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded and prosecuted by every one of us, and our posterity, according to their place and stations.”

The Martyrs that suffered under the Prelatical persecution, from the first to the last, avouched their steadfast belief in the perpetual obligation of the British Covenants, and sealed with their blood, this as a special and prominent article of their testimony. “God,” said the noble MARQUIS OF ARGYLE on the scaffold, “hath laid engagements on Scotland. We are tied by covenants to religion and reformation. Those that were then unborn are yet engaged; and it passeth the power of all the magistrates under heaven to absolve them from the oath of God. They deceive themselves, and, it may be, would deceive others, who think otherwise.” The REV. JAMES GUTHRIE, who suffered a few days after the Marquis of Argyle, said in his dying testimony—“I do bear

my witness to the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant betwixt the three kingdoms. These sacred, solemn public oaths of God, I believe can be loosed by no person, or party, or power upon earth, but are still binding upon these kingdoms, and will be for ever hereafter; and are ratified and sealed by the conversion of many thousand souls, since our entering thereunto." The memorable last words of this excellent man, indicate how cordially he believed in the perpetual obligation of the covenants; and were prophetic of the future revival and triumph of the principles contained in them. A few minutes before he was turned over on the scaffold—raising the cap from his face, he firmly and loudly exclaimed—"*The Covenants—the Covenants will yet be Scotland's reviving.*"

Since the Revolution in 1688, when a Settlement, civil and ecclesiastical, was established, which amounted to a disannulling of the Covenanted Reformation, there have been, in these countries, always a number of witnesses, who have testified in behalf of the perpetual obligation of the nation's scriptural vows. True it is, the rulers at that period passed over in oblivion, the eminent attainments of reforming times, and the nation ingloriously acquiesced in the neglect and apostacy—while even the Presbyterian Church of Scotland uttered no protestation against acts which despoiled her of some of her most valuable privileges, and offered no plea in favour of former sacred engagements. But, for many years after the Revolution, a number of the most distinguished evangelical ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, continued to plead in their writings for the obligation of the covenants—to point out the evils flowing from the neglect and breach

of federal vows—and to urge upon the Church and nation, a return to covenanted fidelity. Until the time that the baleful influence of Moderatism had extensively corrupted the doctrine, and marred the discipline of the Scottish National Church, there were always some within her pale to plead for the integrity and binding force of her time-honoured federal engagements; and these were known as the ablest advocates of Scriptural doctrine and practical godliness. The men whose writings tended to promote the cause of evangelical truth, and to nourish the piety of Scotland during the incubus of moderatism and the declension of practical godliness, which characterized a great part of the eighteenth century—almost without exception, held the permanent obligation of the nation's sacred vows. Though their connexion with the Revolution Church placed them in a position most unfavourable to give proper effect to their pleadings, there can be no doubt, that their writings tended to keep alive in the public mind a sense of federal obligation.*

From the close of the Prelatical persecution, and the era of the Revolution, there have been not only individuals, but likewise religious bodies that have publicly professed adherence to the covenants, National and Solemn League, and that have embodied this profession in their ecclesiastical symbols. The SOCIETY PEOPLE—much as they have been misrepresented and reproached by historians of former and later times, and by writers of fiction, accounted it their honour to maintain the scriptural principles of

* The excellent Willison of Dundee, whose works have been eminently blessed for the edification and comfort of God's people, in various parts of his writings, refers to the obligation of the British Covenants, and represents departure from them as a principal cause of evil in the Church and of Divine displeasure against the nation.

the Second Reformation—and especially, to hold fast the sacredness and inviolability of the nation's vows. The OLD DISSENTERS, as they were termed, refused to incorporate either with the civil or ecclesiastical establishment of the Revolution, from a faithful regard to the covenants, National and Solemn League, which they cordially believed to be scriptural, and from the obligation of which they held, that no earthly power could absolve them. However the profane moralist may sneer at such men, or persons of lax and time-serving principles may condemn them, it must be confessed that they made a noble stand for sound principle, at a time when it was no easy task to oppose themselves to a nation's defection. Candid historians have at length begun to do them tardy justice; and we may hope that the day is coming, when, with the revival and spread of evangelical truth, their principles and conduct will be still farther appreciated.

The REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, claiming to be the proper descendants of Scotland's covenanted reformers and martyrs, from its earliest organization, embodied an acknowledgment of the perpetual obligation of the British covenants, in the fundamental articles of its public profession; and has been a constant witness to it, in every by-past period of its history. It has given the most decided and unambiguous testimony to this important principle, by refusing to incorporate with the national society, or to take any part in national measures which would, in any degree, compromise it. The fathers of the SECESSION, without exception, professed in their writings and public ecclesiastical deeds, the same doctrine; and though that section of the Church early countenanced practices which ap-

pear to us incompatible with a full admission of the national obligation of the British Covenants; and the larger part of the Secession Body at a later period gave up this article of their profession, there has always been a distinguished minority, that have firmly maintained the principles which others rejected. Such truly-eminant men—as John Brown of Haddington—Dr. M'Crie, the historian of Knox and Melville, and Stevenson and Paxton, have emitted vindications of the doctrine of continued federal engagement, which opponents have never been able to answer; and they themselves willingly endured privations in maintaining this important doctrine.

At various times, too, the principle of descending covenant obligation has been practically exemplified by the renovation, by the Secession Church, of the British Covenants, in accommodation to its circumstances as an ecclesiastical body. This was done shortly after the first organization of the Secession Church, by one of its branches;* and on several occasions, in later times, by the *Original Seceders*—that portion which, amidst various defections and trials, has adhered steadfastly to the grand principles of the Secession.† The large and influential body—the Free Church of Scotland—though it does not in its constitution, formally or explicitly

* The Anti-burgher part of the Secession.—See Gibb's Display.

† The most recent instance of Covenant-Renovation by this section of the Church occurred at the meeting of Synod held in Glasgow, in May 1853—when the ministers and elders assembled manifested their earnest attachment to the British covenants, by swearing them, in a Bond suited to their state and circumstances.

The doctrine of continued federal obligation, and the special obligation of the British Covenants have been ably exhibited and defended in various writings of the late Dr. M'Crie, particularly in his "Sermons on the Unity of the Church," and in the "Testimony of the Original Secession Church,"—and in the writings of Stevenson, and Paxton.

own the obligation of the federal deeds of the fathers of the Scottish Reformation, and though its "*Claim of Rights*" is, in several instances, evidently incompatible with a full recognition of the Reformation attainments, has yet manifested, by numbers of its ministers and members, a sense of the value and importance of covenant obligation. In the "Overture of a Testimony" prepared by a committee, consisting of several leading ministers of the Free Church, the covenants of our fathers are mentioned in terms of the highest respect; and it is explicitly declared that both the Church and the nation lie under special obligation to be the Lord's people, in virtue of the Scriptural vows of their forefathers. An Association too has been recently formed among ministers and other office-bearers in the Free Church, in whose declaration of fundamental principles, the obligation of the British Covenants is strongly asserted. It is, moreover, confessed that prevailing evils in the Free Church and throughout the land are to be traced to breach of covenant; and the proposal is put forward to adopt practical measures for the revival of a sense of covenant-obligation, and even for the public renewal of former federal engagements. In some of the presbyteries of the Free Church, a similar proposal had been made and entertained. Such movements are to be regarded with deep interest. They indicate the special favour of the God of our fathers in keeping alive a sense of the principle of federal obligation. He remembers his covenant, by exciting his faithful servants to remember it. Though some may not be fully aware of the consequences to which a practical owning of the British Covenants would lead them, in dissolving connexion with corrupt civil systems,

yet we hail these pleadings and proposals as showing that great principles long neglected are rising into public notice, and that the time is hastening on, when, in the way of solemn federal dedication, many devoted men will resolutely contend for them, and achieve for them a glorious triumph. Events of a solemn character that are transpiring throughout the nations—the ominous signs of trials and changes of a momentous kind approaching—and the felt necessities of the Church for revival and a bond of union and co-operation in Christian effort, and for common defence against enemies and increasing evils, are pressing upon thoughtful and earnest minds inquiries into the nature of federal obligation; and are urging them to seek after the observance of an ordinance which has been eminently owned in past ages as an instrument of deliverance to the Church, and which inspired prediction assures us will be the basis of future revival and enlargement. These we regard as hopeful symptoms of the progress and ascendancy of a martyr-testimony; and we cannot but cherish the assured conviction that the period is not far distant, when, in the way of federal union, Ephraim and Judah shall be “one stick” in the Lord’s hand—when the Lord shall be King over all the earth,—when there shall be one Lord, and his name one.

SECTION V.

RENOVATION OF THE COVENANTS, NATIONAL AND SOLEMN LEAGUE, BY THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE duty of renewing the solemn federal engagements of ancestors, at suitable times, has been

maintained in all past ages, by those who were concerned for the Divine honour, or were desirous of the prosperity of true religion. Sometimes it may have been questioned, whether there was a special and distinct call to the duty. But when circumstances, internal or external, appeared to point to confederation as a means of arresting evil or of securing good, faithful men have never hesitated to have recourse to the renewal of former religious covenants. Some distinguished writers have concluded, from a careful inspection of the inspired word, that public covenanting was performed, not less than *three times*, during the encampment of Israel at Mount Horeb. However this be, it is certain that the National Covenant then entered into was renewed *forty years* after, at the end of the wanderings in the wilderness, in the view of the immediate entrance of Israel into the land of promise. Five-and-twenty years after, at the conclusion of the wars of Canaan, Joshua led the people to another act of renewing the covenant of their fathers, and pledged them to devoted obedience, in the prospect of their settlement in their covenanted inheritance.

In subsequent periods of the history of the Hebrew Commonwealth, under the reforming princes of Judah, recourse was had to covenant-renovation, as an approved means of recovery from apostacy—of revival from decay, as well as a tried way of advancing true religion and national prosperity. In none of these instances, was it alleged that the mere acknowledgment of former covenant-engagements was sufficient. The actual exemplification of covenanting was reckoned of primary importance. The explicit renewal of the vows of ancestors was re-

garded as a proper and necessary expression of contrition for past backsliding, as the most impressive method of forsaking evil courses and returning to God, and the proper basis of all right reformation.

Such approved examples of covenant-renovation furnish a Divine warrant for the duty, which cannot be gainsayed or set aside, without impugning the wisdom of Him who has recorded them, and who has appended to them the seal of his special approval. It is, moreover, worthy of remark, that when the great body of the Jewish people had forsaken the covenant of God, and had lost the sense of its continued obligation, a minority of the nation testified their cordial adhesion to it, by publicly renewing it, and this, too, with tokens of gracious approval. Thus, when the ten tribes made defection from the house of David, and in gross violation of the national covenant, fell into idolatry, the small kingdom of Judah adhered to the vows of their fathers, as the Divine compact between rulers and ruled, and as the charter of their distinguishing privileges; and on various occasions, solemnly and explicitly renewed them. Again, while the majority of the nation remained with their possessions in the country of Chaldea, the remnant that returned from the Babylonish captivity, animated by holy prophets who were specially raised up, and led by servants of God eminently endued with the Spirit, laid the foundation of their civil and ecclesiastical polity by acts of renewed federal dedication. We have thus a clear Divine warrant, not only for the national renewal of Scriptural vows, but likewise for the duty of a minority of faithful men explicitly avouching their attachment to the same covenants, when the nation as such has abandoned

them, adapting the national bond to their altered condition and circumstances.

The REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in these countries, has, from the earliest periods of its history, acted on these principles, and given to them effect in her profession and practice. So strict and uniform has been her adherence to the scriptural covenants that were entered into by the nation in the reforming periods, that she has been designated by way of distinction and eminence—the COVENANTING CHURCH. Though some others have embodied in their ecclesiastical profession the principle of covenant-obligation, this section of the Church alone has manifested that attachment to the British Covenants, which has led her, amidst privations and sacrifices of no insignificant kind, to refuse to enter into any connexion, civil or ecclesiastical, that is inconsistent with the fullest maintenance of the perpetual obligation of these venerable deeds, or that would interfere with the prosecution of the great ends which they contemplated.

During the Prelatical persecution under Charles II. and James II., the Scottish martyrs not only testified from the scaffold to the scriptural excellency and binding force of the nation's vows, but when the majority of the Presbyterian people, crushed by lengthened suffering, admitted the royal supremacy, by accepting ensnaring *Indulgences*, a faithful remnant that weathered the storm, and resolutely endured all hardships rather than compromise sound principles, manifested too the most devoted adherence to the covenants—refusing to purchase life by abjuring them, and regarding them as the bond of their union, and the last hope of revival and blessing for their native country. When others had

acted perfidiously, they recognized the special duty of a minority to avouch their regard to scriptural vows; and when exposed to perils of no ordinary kind, they publicly and explicitly renewed them. Thus at Lanark, in 1666, those who appeared in arms in defence of their most valued rights, solemnly renewed the Covenants, when on their way to Pentland; and it is recorded of the transaction, that the horsemen of the persecutors, though in view when they engaged in the work, left the Covenanters undisturbed. The shield of Jehovah's protection was visibly around his servants, while they pledged themselves anew to his service. In several of the public testimonies which were emitted, as the persecution continued and was increased in intensity, the continued obligation of the covenants was assigned a prominent place. When the Covenanters appeared in arms at *Bothwell Bridge*, and made a valiant attempt to rescue their native country from the most grievous oppression, they refused to accept doubtful aid, by compromising the grand principle of Covenant-obligation, or acknowledging in any way the monarch who had trampled on the nation's dearest rights, and who had violated every proper compact by which the relation between the ruler and the subjects was regulated.

The heroic SOCIETY PEOPLE, who manfully bared their bosoms to the sword, when others adopted a time-serving policy, clung to the covenants of the Church and nation, as the grand means of union and deliverance. When their faithful leaders had shed their blood on the scaffold—when their ranks were thinned by the sword of the enemy—and when they stood daily exposed to torture and death, they notwithstanding raised aloft the banner for truth; and

the motto, "*For Christ's Crown and Covenant*," appeared conspicuously upon it, as it did when their fathers confronted the hosts of Prelatical oppressors.

The successors of these noble-minded men, at the period of the Revolution, followed in their steps, with dauntless courage and unyielding resolution. With sorrow of heart, they witnessed a Settlement framed, which both in its civil and ecclesiastical parts, was a palpable abandonment of former Scriptural attainments, and a rejection of the sacred engagements into which the nation had repeatedly entered. Their duty was plain. When others ignobly succumbed under the yoke of the oppressor, and lost the favourable opportunity of bringing back the Church and nation to a sense of their allegiance to Messiah the Prince, they openly dissented, and refused to incorporate with the ecclesiastical Establishment and the national society, which were then evidently constituted on a perfidious abandonment of the covenants of their fathers. At the period of the Revolution, a few, within the courts of the National Church of Scotland, uttered a public testimony in behalf of a recognition of former vows; but this was contemptuously disregarded. Those who spoke timidly in favour of the Covenants, yielded to the prevailing defection; and not only was no protestation offered by the ecclesiastical courts against retaining the infamous Act Rescissory in the Statute-Book, but oppressive measures were speedily resorted to against those who dared to plead in the ecclesiastical courts, in favour of recognizing the obligation of the covenants.* In such a case, there was

* The Rev. John M'Millan of Balmaghie—who afterwards acceded to the *Society People*—was actually tried by the Presbytery of Kirk-

no alternative left to those who maintained faithful allegiance to Messiah the Prince, and who valued his royal prerogatives above all earthly treasures. They voluntarily separated themselves from connexions that were evil and ensnaring; and they went forth without the camp to Jesus, "bearing his reproach." The scattered Society People,—the remnants of *twenty-eight* years' cruel and relentless persecution, deprived of a stated ministry, maintained a holy fellowship, in associations for united prayer, and mutual spiritual converse, on the basis of their covenanted confederation. In these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that they should look to the covenants of their fathers, as a happy means of preserving them from national defection; and of conducting them to the privileges of full ecclesiastical communion. The Reformation in Scotland had been begun and auspiciously carried forward not only without the aid of the ruling powers, but even in opposition to them, by means of solemn covenants. It had been restored to more than pristine beauty, and mightily advanced after long years of decay and oppression, by the same instrumentality. The covenants had all along been the watch-word of civil and ecclesiastical freedom; and never had the Covenanted Standard been faithfully unfurled, without inspiring the hearts of the faithful with renewed courage, supplying a defence against the power of enemies—and leading forward the

cudbright, and sentence of deposition from the ministry was pronounced against him, for no other crime than that of pleading for the obligation of the National Covenants. This sentence was afterwards confirmed by the Commission! The courts of the Established Church of Scotland are therefore to be regarded, after the Revolution, as not merely refusing to own the obligation of the Covenants, but as determinedly opposed to such an acknowledgment, and as persecuting faithful men on account of their advocacy of a nation's Scriptural VOWS.

Church to the enjoyment of higher privileges. Filled with such recollections, the Covenanters who stood aloof from the Revolution-Settlement early proposed the renewal of the British Covenants—regarding it as their present duty to protest, in the most solemn and public manner, against national defection—and considering this step, too, as an eminent means of safety and enlargement. The first attempt made for the performance of this important duty after the Revolution, disappointed the expectations of the faithful adherents of the Covenanted Reformation. The *Angus* or *Cameronian Regiment*, that rendered such signal service to the Scottish Convention of Estates, in protecting them from the infamous Dundee, and the adherents of the abdicated James, and at Dunkeld, soon made defection from the ground of the Second Reformation, in accepting office, and taking oaths, binding them to a system eversive of the covenanted constitution. The preachers—Linning, Shields, and Boyd, who ministered to the scattered Societies, for a short time after the martyrdom of Renwick, yielded to the expressed wish of the Fellowship Meetings, to renew the Covenants. But in the Bond prepared for this purpose, they introduced clauses, which acknowledged the Revolution-Settlement, the tendency of which was to draw those who took the Covenant to incorporate with it. This insidious attempt had nearly led away from their steadfastness some who had weathered the storm of persecution. So difficult is it to detect evil when peace succeeds to lengthened trial, and when the way of defection becomes popular and general. The sagacious and far-seeing mind of the godly and devoted *Sir Robert Hamilton* was the first to perceive the danger, and

to warn the Societies against a course which would have involved an abandonment of reformation attainments.

When the Rev. JOHN M'MILLAN of Balmaghie, acceded to the Society people, and they had obtained that which they so eagerly desired, and for which they had so long patiently waited—a stated ministry, the proposal to renew the Covenants was earnestly taken up, and carried into accomplishment. After the design had been duly considered in the various Fellowship Meetings, the few faithful adherents of a Covenanted Testimony came to the resolution to connect the renovation of the Covenants with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. Owing to their dispersed state, and the want of ministerial help, they could enjoy this precious ordinance but seldom. It was therefore deemed suitable to connect with the sacramental vow, an explicit and public acknowledgment of the solemn covenants of their forefathers.

Accordingly, Wednesday, the 23d of July, 1712, was observed as a day of fasting and humiliation by those who designed to engage in the service, and who convened in considerable numbers from different parts of Scotland, at a place called AUCHINSAUGH, near Hamilton. The opening devotional services were conducted by the *Rev. John M'Millan*; and afterwards, *Mr. John M'Neill*, probationer, preached a full and appropriate discourse from Jeremiah l. 4, 5, illustrating and confirming the two following propositions:—1. *That a people in covenant with God may be forgetful of, and deal falsely in their covenant*; and 2. *That it is the duty of a people who have broken covenant with God, to engage themselves again to the Lord by the renovation of their covenant*. After the conclusion of the sermon,

the Covenants National and Solemn League were first read; and again an Acknowledgment of sins, which had been carefully prepared—enumerating at length, the public sins of the Church and the nation, and which displayed breach of covenant with God, and its consequences, was also read; and the principal matters contained in this paper were embodied in the confession made by the congregation in solemn prayer. The assembly was then dismissed with a suitable exhortation, urging intended Covenanters to seek a heart-melting frame for the right performance of the important service.

On Thursday, the 24th July, at the same place, the great work of covenant-renovation was performed with all solemnity—the Rev. John M'Millan having first preached, with much fulness and pointed application, from Isaiah xlv. 5. At the close of the discourse, the Acknowledgment of Sins was again read; and then a public confession was openly made before the congregation by members who had been chargeable with steps of defection—the minister himself making, with the people, confession of his sins in the ministry. The sins thus mentioned were then specially confessed to God in prayer; and the *Engagement to duties* being read to the congregation, the minister showed that the design of this paper was to adapt the Covenants to the circumstances of those who were to be employed in the renewal. Suitable warning having been given to deter the unworthy; and the gracious presence and assistance of the Holy Spirit having been sought in solemn prayer, the minister proceeded to administer the oath of the Covenant,—the people who engaged, elevating their right hands at the end of each article. The solemn and interesting service was then con-

cluded, by appropriate exhortations, in relation to the importance and spirit of performing covenant engagements.

On the Sabbath immediately following the work of covenanting, those who had thus avouched anew their adherence to the sacred vows of their fathers, joined together in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Thus they ratified their engagements over the precious memorials of the Saviour's death, and they sought, before they returned to their several spheres of labour and trial, to realize the fellowship of saints, and communion with the God of their fathers. The act of Renovation was performed, on this occasion, by swearing the original covenants, with *marginal alterations*—accommodating them to the condition of the Covenanters, who used these national federal deeds, as a basis of union in principle and action, and as a public protest against national defection. The engagement to duties was designed to be of the nature of a Bond, pledging the swearers to the practical application of the principles of the Covenant.

Though exception has been taken to some of the expressions and sentiments contained in the documents, which were employed in this instance of covenant-renovation; and it may be freely admitted that, in some cases, there are grounds of objection—this should not hinder us from ascribing to the spirit and conduct of our illustrious forefathers the meed of our approval and admiration. They had escaped from a savage and relentless persecution—many of them having been in perils often—being despoiled of their worldly property, and having some of their dearest friends cut off by cruel persecutors. They were grievously disappointed in the settlement that had taken place at the Revolution.

When they beheld the rulers and people in the nation, and the National Church, evidently apostate from the principles which they so highly valued, and which had been purchased at such costly sacrifices, it is not to be wondered at, that they should have entertained strong views, and that in some instances they should have expressed themselves unguardedly. But it is undeniable that they exhibited an honest and fervent attachment to principles, which it was once Scotland's glory to profess before the world, and for adherence to which many of her noblest sons had willingly shed their blood.

Besides, there is no principle in the Auchinsaugh Renovation which is not either contained in the original covenants, or which by plain inference may not be deduced from them. The *spirit* of the Covenanters on that occasion was excellent; and the transaction in which they engaged was not only the seasonable performance of an important duty, but it also proved of singular benefit in subsequent times. In the words of a candid historian, we may say—“The Auchinsaugh Renovation was an act, in which it would have been well if the whole body of Scottish Presbyterians had joined.”* The National Covenants were by this transaction embodied in the *ecclesiastical profession* of a number who bound themselves thus in the most solemn manner to adhere to them, amidst all trials and sacrifices. The bond, into which they voluntarily entered, was a happy means of preserving them from prevailing defection—and from the errors in doctrine and laxity in discipline, which, as the natural fruit of apostacy from Scriptural attainments, speedily overspread the Church of Scotland. It tended to give the faithful witnesses

* Hetherington's History of Church of Scotland, Vol. II. p. 266.

for a covenanted testimony, full ecclesiastical organization; and to unite them in holy fellowship, and in exertions for the diffusion of the truth. The principles and spirit which they displayed they were honoured to transmit as a precious heritage to posterity; and there can be no doubt that, through succeeding generations, even to our own day, the witnesses for the royal prerogatives of Messiah the Prince, in this and other countries, have cherished a sense of the superadded obligation of federal engagements, from the conduct of their worthy ancestors; as their example has cheered them under privation and difficulties, and animated them to resolute steadfastness and perseverance, in maintaining the cause of Christ and advancing his kingdom.

The next instance of Covenant-Renovation by those who adhered to the whole of the attainments of the Second Reformation, occurred more than *thirty years* afterwards. The *Secession Body*, soon after its organization, engaged in an act of renewing the British Covenants, by a Bond adapted to their circumstances, accompanied by a Confession of sins,—containing an enumeration of public defections, and of prevailing sins, social, ecclesiastical, and personal. There can be no doubt that this measure proved beneficial in preserving evangelical doctrine and practical religion in that section of the Church, for a length of time, during the declension in piety and the irreligion that spread so widely throughout these countries, in the latter half of the last century. It served, besides, to call the attention of the nation to vows that were disregarded; and to valuable principles which, through the perfidy of rulers in the Church and State, had been consigned to oblivion. At the same time, it was seen and felt

by those who owned the full obligation of the British Covenants, and who had due regard to their original design, as the righteous compact between rulers and ruled, and as the basis of the national legislation and administration, that there was something defective and inconsistent in the act of the Seceders in renewing these Covenants, while yet they incorporated with the national society, which was based on their rejection, and which gave active support to men in power and authority, who were pledged by oath to systems diametrically opposed to the Covenanted Reformation.

The REFORMED PRESBYTERY was organized in 1743; and in 1745, there took place another public renovation of the Covenants, by them and their adherents, in a manner similar to that at Auchin-saugh. The place at which the Covenants were renewed on this occasion was *Crawford-John*. Although at the time, this service was felt to be refreshing and invigorating, yet, owing to the circumstance that less preparation was made than the importance of the work demanded; and there was not so full a representation of the scattered adherents of the covenanted testimony as was desirable, and as no full and particular record of the proceedings was emitted, this instance of covenanting, in a few years, came to be less referred to among the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Body, than that which had taken place soon after the Revolution.*

* In the "Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church," the following judicious observations, in relation to the duty of renewing the Covenants, and to the new obligation arising from instances of covenant-renovation, are made in connexion with the covenanting at *Crawford-John*:—

"As this was the last instance in which public covenants were renewed in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, we beg here to offer the following observations—1st, That covenanting is an occasional

A period of more than a century elapsed from the renovation of the Covenants at Crawford-John, until a similar transaction took place among the friends of the Covenanted reformation in any part of these kingdoms. The latter half of the eighteenth century was a time of general declension throughout the British Churches. There was a wide-spread departure from the principles of the Protestant Standards. The profession of evangelical truth was unpopular. Fundamental errors were zealously propagated and embraced by many. Lax and latitudinarian views respecting the fellowship of the Church generally prevailed. Godly practice was rare, and among the few who knew and professed the truth, little was done to arrest the progress of destructive errors, and nothing was attempted for the diffusion of the Gospel among those who lay beyond the pale of nominal Christianity. It need not be thought strange that at such a period, the few scattered adherents of the Covenanted Reformation should not be seen assuming any prominent position in displaying a "banner for truth." They laboured amidst obloquy and discouragement to proclaim the

duty, to be performed as the circumstances of the Church, or of a nation may seem to demand; and that the permanent obligation of the covenants of these lands depends on their moral and scriptural character, rather than their being publicly recognized or renewed. 2d, Yet we believe, that where a church or people have been brought under the bond of such engagements, it is a duty warranted by reason and Scripture occasionally to renew them, as the aspects of Divine providence may require. 3d, We believe that the defection of a great majority of a church or nation from such covenants, does not cancel their obligation; and that the call upon a minority, who adheres to them, to bring them up to remembrance, becomes the more urgent when the public acts of the majority have a tendency to bury them in oblivion. 4th, We approve of the zeal and faithfulness which prompted our fathers to engage in this work at seasonable times, and admit that we are placed under superadded obligations to adhere to these covenants, in consequence of their deeds of renovation."—*Historical Part of Testimony*—pp. 187, 188.

Gospel in a limited sphere, and to preserve Divine ordinances pure from human additions and corruptions. They cultivated in retirement a holy fellowship, and exemplified a godly practice. It required no little watchfulness and effort to preserve themselves, and such as united with them, from being carried down by the tide of defection. Yet while we sympathize with our pious forefathers, in relation to their trials, in a period of general declension, and award them the praise of steadfastness in the faith, we cannot but think that more might have been attempted to hold up before the nation a faithful standard, to remind the Churches of the position from whence they had fallen, and to call them to repentance, and the performance of first works.

There were certainly some occasions suffered to pass, when the call was loud and distinct, to renew former federal engagements, when a public measure of this kind might have been of singular advantage to the witnesses for truth themselves, and when it might have subserved important ends to others, in preserving from farther defection, and in discovering to them the excellence of a faithful profession. Such calls to covenant-renovation were presented at the adoption of the first Judicial Testimony in 1761—afterwards when infidel and revolutionary principles spread extensively throughout the community at the close of the last century—and at the time when Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Church were constituted in Scotland and Ireland. And, when the first *Missionary* movements in the British Churches commenced, had the friends of the British Covenants duly considered the principles of these sacred deeds, and faithfully renewed them, there can be little doubt that, notwithstanding their

fewness and limited resources, they would have occupied the front rank in the grand attempt to “bring the King back,” and to render the nations subject to him, as his covenanted inheritance. When opportunities for doing good are suffered to pass unimproved, the progress of a righteous cause is retarded, and the Church becomes “as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,” instead of a consecrated host—advancing to new victories, or as a tabernacle, strengthening her stakes, and stretching forth the curtains of her habitation.

In the early part of the present century, the attention of the British Churches was called to the long-neglected covenants of our fathers, by the writings of several distinguished advocates of the truth. Their nature and continued obligation were fully exhibited, and they were ably vindicated against the objections, cavils and misrepresentations of various writers who had vilified and reproached them, and of ecclesiastical bodies that had repudiated the principle of their descending obligation. The works of Mason, Paxton, M'Crie, Moorhead, Morrison, and Stevenson, did valuable service, in bringing prominently into view, the federal deeds that were once the glory of the British Churches and nation—in clearing away much groundless misrepresentation—and though these works did not explicitly plead for the exemplification of the principle of covenanting by an express act of renovation, they yet presented the subject in such a light that numbers throughout the Church became more deeply impressed with the importance and value of the British Covenants, as a bond of unity, and an approved means of revival and extension to the Church.

For some time, the matter of renewing the Cove-

nants National and Solemn League, in a bond suited to the condition of the Church, engaged the attention of the Supreme Judicatory of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland; and in 1822, there was emitted by its authority, a paper in overture, containing an Act of Covenant-Renovation and a confession of sins—the design being to lead the members of the Church to exemplify their profession by a solemn renovation of the covenants. The writer of this paper, which was at once comprehensive and appropriate, was the late venerable Professor Symington. It bears the impress of his enlightened sense of public duty, enlarged heart, and fervent piety. For some time after, this overture was under the consideration of the Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Church both in Scotland and Ireland; but, from various causes, no steps were taken to carry out the design in an act of public renovation.

In the year 1830, DR. M'LEOD of New York—well known by his works, and as an able advocate of the scriptural principles of civil and religious liberty, visited these countries. To the respective Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland and Ireland, which he attended, and where his presence was hailed with cordial satisfaction, he proposed a plan of Covenant-Renovation for the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Britain and America, and for any others who might unite with them in the service; and he submitted the draught of a Bond for this purpose. This proposal was gladly received by the friends of the Covenanted Reformation in these countries. The time was regarded as opportune for promoting a closer union and greater fraternal intercourse among the witnesses for the

royal prerogatives of the Redeemer, and for taking more decisive measures for the advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness. The attempts of enemies admonished of approaching danger; and various steps of national defection seemed to call for the public protest of Christ's witnesses, and for a renewed exhibition of the only true principles of national safety and blessing. One section of the Presbyterian body in Scotland—that which professed adherence to the testimony of the "Original Seceders" had shortly before renewed the Covenants, in 1827—on the occasion of the union of the *Protestors* with the *Constitutional Presbytery*, and the emission of their Testimony.

In 1829, the British Parliament had notoriously abandoned the great principle of the National Covenants, in the passing of the act for *Roman Catholic Emancipation*, and for the admission of the sworn abettors of the Papacy to places of influence in the councils of the nation. However this measure was lauded by many as wise state policy, it could be viewed in no other light by the friends of Scriptural truth and freedom, than as palpably opposed to the nation's solemn vows, and as fraught with imminent danger to the best interests, civil and religious, of the empire. The warnings which at the time were uttered by a few faithful men, and which were generally unheeded and despised, have since been sadly verified. The confusions which followed in the national councils, and throughout various parts of the community, and the concessions that have since been made to Popish claims—with the numerous perversions of persons of influence throughout the nation to Popery, have exhibited the proper fruits of this ill-fated measure; and it seems not unlikely that a

still more bitter experience will hereafter attest the Divine displeasure against the nation for entering into a league with Antichrist. The plan of Covenant-Renovation proposed by Dr. M'Leod, and received for consideration by the Reformed Synods in Britain, had not that measure of success which was at first anticipated. The draught of the Bond for covenanting, though characterized by the comprehensive views and felicitous expressions which distinguish the writings of the venerable proposer, appeared, on careful consideration, to those who were most desirous of displaying a full covenanted standard for truth, of too general a nature, and as less explicit in relation to the application of some leading principles, than the interests of truth, and the position of faithful witnesses demanded. This may have arisen from the avowed design of Dr. M'Leod, to engage others in the act of covenanting, besides those who were in the fellowship of the Reformed Presbyterian Church; and from the anticipation natural to sanguine minds, that others, attracted by an uplifted banner, would readily join in the same holy confederation. However desirable it would be to witness such a union among the friends of truth, all past experience serves to show, that it may not be expected, till men are brought by the power of Divine truth, and by a larger measure of the Spirit's influences, to forsake connexion with corrupt systems, whether civil or ecclesiastical. The witnesses for the crown rights of Messiah—and for the supremacy of the word, will continue clothed in sackcloth, and must be contented to be few, poor, and limited in their influence, until the period of Antichrist's downfall, and till the nations submit to the sceptre of Immanuel.

Unhappily, too, divisions in the Church, which sprung up at the time, obstructed the progress of the work of Covenant-Renovation. After the draught of a Bond for covenanting had been for some time under the consideration of the committees of the Reformed Synods in Scotland and Ireland, and was before the Church in America, a schism took place in the Covenanting Body in the American Republic, and divisions in sentiment in relation to various parts of the Testimony occurred in the Church in Ireland. In the year 1833, a number of leading ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America abandoned the testimony which covenanting witnesses had always been understood to maintain against the unscriptural and immoral constitution of the United States. Though there is no clear evidence that Dr. McLeod sympathized with this movement, yet of those who were chiefly instrumental in promoting it, several were ministers of long standing in the Church, and had been long known as his intimate friends. It must be evident, that in such circumstances, the church was not in a condition to engage heartily in the work of covenanting. Hence was it that faithful covenanting witnesses in America, tried with the defection from a martyr-testimony of those who seemed to be pillars, and called to contend earnestly against those who had formerly been brethren in the same common profession, were hindered from making a solemn public exhibition of their sense of the obligation of the federal deeds of their ancestors.

In the Church in Ireland, discussions respecting the extent of the *Magistrate's power* in the matters of religion, and other collateral doctrines, which lasted for ten years, likewise hindered the work of

Covenant-Renovation. While brethren were opposed to each other on subjects, not of minor importance, but on matters that had all along entered into the confessions and testimonies of faithful witnesses, it was plain that there was not that unity of principle, and that agreement of heart that are essential to entering into a covenant, which would embrace all former reformation-attainments, and avow a holy brotherhood. The painful separation which took place in the Irish section of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in the year 1840, placed a small number of ministers, some of them of long standing in the Church, and the people that adhered to them, under the pretence of enlarged *liberality*, in the position of antagonism to articles, which had always been thought to occupy a place in the testimonies and contendings of covenanted witnesses. Denying and opposing doctrines which were plainly involved in National Covenanting, and which are explicitly declared in the British Covenants; and accepting the praise and support of parties that were avowed and embittered enemies to the principles of these venerable deeds, they could not but be regarded as having made defection from valuable reformation-attainments, and their course was plainly disorderly and schismatic. The trials, internal and external, to which this melancholy division exposed the faithful adherents of a covenanted Testimony, served to excite inquiry—test attachment to truths, which though unpopular, were susceptible of extensive applications, and of great practical value—and to unite in firmer fraternal concord, those who had been called to suffer reproach for the name's sake of Christ. Thus "the wrath of man" is frequently made to praise God; and the servants of Christ, after passing through

the ordeal of conflict and affliction, are prepared to make a fuller display of a scriptural profession, and to devise and execute measures for its advancement. The defection from reformation attainments of a number—the endurance of obloquy and opposition from the world during the progress of the discussions—and the necessity of taking measures to unite in closer fellowship the friends of truth, and to excite the Church to more vigorous exertions for maintaining and diffusing her testimony—all pointed to the great duty of Covenant-Renovation, as the best and most approved way of accomplishing these objects. When “the Enemy comes in like a flood,” a primary duty, as instruments in the hands of the Spirit, of faithful men, is to “lift up a standard against him.” No standard appeared to be better suited for this purpose than that which had inscribed upon it—“*For Christ’s crown and covenant*”—that which had already been uplifted by holy hands—which had waved upon many a field of conflict and suffering—and which is destined yet to be the signal of universal triumph. The conviction that covenant-renovation was among the first steps that should be taken to resist defection—repair the breaches of Zion, and advance precious truth, was not only felt by some—ministers and elders, who had been called to contend for truth,—but appears also to have taken possession of prayerful and public-spirited persons, not a few, throughout the membership of the church.

Accordingly, so soon as peace was restored to the courts of the Lord’s house, a movement was made to resume the consideration of the duty of public covenanting. At the annual meeting of Synod, in 1841,—the first that occurred after the disruption,—a

petition was presented from the Session and members of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation in Belfast,—praying the Supreme Judicatory to take steps for the renovation of the covenants of our fathers, and assigning various weighty reasons for seeking the adoption of such a measure—among which were the necessity of promoting and exhibiting unity in sentiment and affection in the Church, and of displaying a testimony for truth, which others might be led to contemplate and embrace. This petition, which had evidently been framed by men who had rightly appreciated the wants of the time, and the peculiar duty of the Church, proved to be most opportune. It met with a ready response, in the appointment by Synod of a Committee to prepare a plan of Covenant-Renovation; and at the next annual meeting, a number of similar petitions were presented from other congregations of the Church.

The proper **MODE** of renewing the British Covenants by ministers and members of the Church, in an ecclesiastical capacity, formed a subject of grave consideration, and interesting discussion. It was at once admitted, that the act of renovation could not possess the character of a national transaction; nor could those engaging in it assume to themselves the functions of representatives of the nation. At the same time, it was never doubted, that after the example of the people of God recorded in the Old Testament, and of covenanted witnesses, both in former and later times, it was competent to the Church, to adapt the covenants, which, though originally national deeds, embodied principles of the most extensive application, to the circumstances of an ecclesiastical body, whose members were under the highest obligation to regulate all their relations

with supreme regard to the authority of Christ the Lord, and to the ultimate standard of his word. The principle which was assumed by the Synod as fundamental was, that all the great doctrines expressed in the Covenants, National and Solemn League, should have a place in the proposed act of renovation—none being overlooked—and that these were to be faithfully and particularly applied to the existing state of the Church and of civil society. Keeping in view this principle, it became a matter of consideration whether the covenants should be taken, in the terms of the original documents, with certain marginal alterations, and a Confession of sins, and engagement to duties, as had been done at *Auchensaugh* and *Crawford-John*—or whether the act of covenanting should be performed by means of a Bond, suited to the circumstances of the Covenanters. After mature consideration, the latter method was adopted,—as that which was fitted to exhibit most clearly the solemn vow of the Church, as witnessing for all precious truth formerly attained, and against all invasions of the Redeemer's royal prerogatives. Besides, it appeared obvious, that, in the different instances of covenanting, at various times, whether recorded in Scripture, or in the uninspired annals of the Church, the Covenant, though substantially the same, had undergone such alterations, as served to accommodate it to the circumstances of the covenanters. The covenant taken in Nehemiah's days, was in reality a bond, founded on the National Covenant at Horeb, and binding to special duties, which were obligatory on the returned captives. The "Engagement to Duties," in the *Auchensaugh* transaction, besides, was plainly of the nature of a bond, exhibiting the principles of the

National Covenants, as applied to the state of the Church and nation—the evils to be confessed and forsaken, and the duties peculiarly required of witnesses for truth. The Bond for Covenant-Renovation was so prepared as to embrace *all the matter of the original covenants*—National and Solemn League—and, as far as possible, the phraseology of these venerable documents. It was therefore seen at once to be the substance of the British Covenants, accommodated to the Church's present obligations and duties, displaying a comprehensive exhibition of the principles of the testimony for truth which are morally unchangeable. The "Confession of Sins," too, contained a faithful protest against multiplied instances of covenant-violation, and an enlarged acknowledgment of sins—personal and social, which appeared to call for special humiliation, and which were calculated to provoke the Divine displeasure against the Church and nation.*

As it was designed from the first that the work of covenanting should be engaged in, not alone by the ecclesiastical judicatories, but also by the members of the Church, the proposal for covenant-renovation was brought before the congregations of the Church; and the Bond and Confession of sins were sent down in overture, for repeated consideration by the inferior judicatories. Though a delay of several years occurred in bringing to completion the measures for

* The Bond for Covenanting and the Confession of Sins, were at first presented in one paper. It was afterwards judged best to separate the Bond and the Confession. Various alterations were made in these papers, at the suggestion of the inferior judicatories, or by members of the Synod; and while the paper which was first offered, presented the basis of what was finally adopted, all pains were taken to make the documents as full and perspicuous as possible—preparatory to their being actually employed in the solemn work of Covenant-Renovation.

covenant-renovation; and at times, those who were most desirous of seeing this good work essayed, felt concerned at the apparent slowness of progress, yet it was gratifying to observe the manner in which the God of our fathers opened the way of his people to the attainment of this high privilege. A large portion of the time of the Judicatories, inferior and superior, was devoted to the consideration of federal vows, and the exercise was found to be solemnizing and profitable to the members. The subject of Covenant-Renovation was frequently brought before the congregations and fellowship-meetings of the Church. The papers were carefully inspected, and there was gratifying and increasing evidence afforded that the matter had engaged the thoughts, and called forth the earnest prayers of the most pious members of the Church. The remarks and memorials presented by the inferior courts upon the overtures submitted to them, discovered, in many cases, an intimate and enlarged acquaintance with the vows and covenanted attainments of a former period, and an earnest and anxious concern that the Church should go forward, in the public avouching of the God of their fathers.

At the meeting of Synod, held prior to that in which final arrangements were made for the work of covenanting, there was presented the expression of an earnest desire from a large majority of the congregations, that the work should forthwith be proceeded in—while from none was there any decided opposition to the measure. It was apparent that the Lord had disposed the hearts of his people to seek to honour Him in the way of covenant obedience; and stirred up many to regard the work of covenant-renovation, not only as a paramount duty, but also

as a high and most desirable privilege. There were, notwithstanding, some difficulties in the way of the performance of this important service; and those who had all along taken a deep and prayerful interest in the matter, were not without fears and misgivings, lest, on the one hand, aught should arise to prevent the Church going forward in a work to which there appeared to be so many loud and distinct calls; and lest, on the other, there should be any engaging rashly or inconsiderately in the service. When the Synod held its usual Annual Meeting in Londonderry, in July 1853, these fears were happily disappointed; and in a manner, at once striking and unexpected, the way was opened up for carrying into accomplishment the design so long cherished, and for attaining the object so much desired. After the report of the Committee that had been appointed to transmit the documents respecting covenant-renewal to the sessions and congregations of the Church was presented, and it became apparent that the mind of the Church generally, was eagerly bent on going forward in the work of covenanting, the ministers and elders entered with much interest into the consideration of the case. Light beamed upon the path of the Lord's servants. A spirit of remarkable cordiality and devotedness appeared to pervade the assembly—betokening the presence of the God of their fathers with those who took hold of his covenant, and giving cheering indication that He was about to return to Zion with mercies. The judgment of the different members of Synod was given with much solemnity; and under the impression of the momentous nature of the duty contemplated. Entire unanimity prevailed; and in a spirit of fervent love, and deep humility and holy joy, it was resolv-

ed to adopt measures for essaying without delay the solemn duty. All felt a special elevation of heart upon the occasion. Thanks were publicly rendered to the King who dwells in Zion, for the abundant tokens of his covenant-favour; and there was realized in a greater measure than the members present had ever hitherto witnessed in the courts of the sanctuary, a season of reviving and refreshment from the Lord's presence.

A Committee for arrangements afterwards reported a plan of covenant-renovation; which was unanimously adopted. It was agreed that the covenants should first be renewed by the Synod, by means of the Bond that had been adopted, and that when this shall have been done, steps shall be taken to extend the work throughout the different congregations of the Church.* A special meeting of Synod was appointed to be held for this purpose, on Tuesday, the 11th, and Wednesday, the 12th of October next. The place selected was DERVOCK—a village in County Antrim, it being in the neighbourhood of a number of the congregations, and a central locality for the Church.

As the time for holding this meeting drew near, the work was regarded with increasing solemnity, by the ministers, elders, and members of the Church. In the devotional services of the sanctuary, societies, and families, there was frequent and special reference to the important service in prospect; and the Lord's gracious presence and countenance were earnestly sought for his servants, who were called to go before others, in entering anew, and in a manner which they had not heretofore essayed, into solemn cove-

* See Appendix.

nant engagements. The spirit of grace and supplication seemed, to a considerable extent, to rest upon the Church; and there was cheering evidence afterwards that these prayers came before God, even into his Temple; and that, in answer to them, there descended “showers of blessing.”

MEETING OF SYNOD FOR COVENANT-RENOVATION.

At the time and place appointed, the Synod convened for the work of covenant-renovation. There was a full attendance of members, with the exception of a very few ministers, who, through age and infirmities, or necessary engagements, were absent. There were, besides, present several licentiates, and a number of ruling elders, who, though not members of Synod, desired to take part in the act of covenanting; and a large concourse of members of the Church, some from remote parts of this country, and several from Scotland,—all coming with apparent earnest desire, to seek communion with the God of their fathers and his servants, in sealing their allegiance to Zion’s King.

The following is a condensed account of the interesting proceedings on this memorable occasion:—

On Tuesday, the 11th October, the members of Synod—ministers and elders—assembled in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, near Dervock, at 11 o’clock A.M.—this having been appointed to be observed as a day of special fasting and prayer, with a view to the work of covenanting. The Synod was constituted by the Moderator—the Rev. Thomas Houston, D.D. The Rev. Robert Wallace, of Newry, by unanimous appointment, acted as Clerk,

pro tempore—the stated Clerk was prevented from attending the meeting, from his having been called to dispense public ordinances at a lengthened distance. Arrangements were first made respecting the order of the services. The Synod unanimously agreed to admit Mr. James Renwick Thompson, a licentiate of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, from the United States, America, who submitted certificates of standing and character, to the act of Covenanting. The devotional exercises of the day were then proceeded with, which were characterized throughout with impressive solemnity.

At 12 o'clock noon, Rev. Robert Wallace commenced with prayer, and explained, in brief and appropriate terms, Psalm cii., from the 10th to the 19th verse. The Moderator afterwards preached on the great duty of confessing and repenting of sin, as a necessary preparation for the work of Covenanting. His discourse was founded on Daniel ix. 4, 5,—“*And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep his commandments: we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even in departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.*” From this text, there were illustrated, with considerable fullness—First, *The Character of the glorious Being* to whom we approach, making confession of sin. After referring to the manner in which God is to be approached in penitential prayer, the OBJECT of worship was spoken of as *our own covenant God—as all-powerful and terrible to execute vengeance—as ever-remembering and faithfully per-*

forming all covenant-engagements—and as rich in mercy to a remnant left. Secondly, The Import of the Confession, with special application to the Synod, and people assembled, was considered. The characteristics of approved confession of sins, as exemplified by the prophet, were first shown; and then, at considerable length, the sins to be specially confessed were exhibited—as those of a professed Christian people enjoying distinguishing privileges—the sins of the ministry and eldership—the transgressions of Covenanted witnesses—and manifold sins, in spirit and conduct, against others in the land. Thirdly, It was shown how penitents are enabled in sincerity and truth to make such a confession. Among the views suggested, were a minute and particular searching of our own ways—a solemn sense of God's presence—the agency of the Holy Spirit—looking to Christ as pierced by our sins—careful observance of tokens of the Divine displeasure upon the Church and the land—and heartfelt dread of the fearful consequences of dealing perfidiously with God. Several suitable inferences and directions were presented in the conclusion; and solemn appeals were addressed to the hearts and consciences of the hearers.

After praise and prayer, the Rev. William Russel read the "*Confession of sins*," that had been adopted by Synod.* After reading this paper, Mr. Russel delivered an impressive address, in which he adverted to a number of the most solemn and important matters contained in the Confession of sins, and specially referred to some of the evils from which the British nation and Churches might have been saved, had the principles of the Covenanted

* See Appendix.

Reformation been faithfully maintained. He made particular mention in this connexion of the Mediatorial Dominion of Christ, as sole King of Zion and the Governor among the nations, and the independence of his Church. He guarded against the supposition that, in referring to the period of the Second Reformation, Covenanters should be considered as believing the attainments then reached to have been perfect, and that nothing beyond them is to be attained. It is a *comparative excellence* only which covenanted witnesses ascribe to it. He stated, moreover, that it is more in sorrow than in anger that we faithfully point out what we believe to be great evils in the constitution and administration of these lands. It is not in a hostile spirit towards the rulers of our beloved native land,—many of whom are endowed with gifts and possessed with qualities which excite our admiration, and engage our affectionate regards. While we should always study to maintain supreme loyalty to the King of kings, we would not fail, in the spirit of apostolic advice, to ask for enlightenment and saving grace for such as fill responsible and influential stations. The attention of fathers and brethren was then directed to some of the sins of ministers and elders, which should be causes of special humiliation. He dwelt particularly on the exceeding sinfulness of sin—its effects—its demerit, as eminently seen in the Cross of Christ, and he exhorted all to look to Him whom their sins had pierced, and mourn for Him. The *kind of Confession* which we should aim at was then pointed out; and the address was concluded with some suitable observations on the importance of such confession, as a step of preparation for covenanting. Mr. Russel afterwards

offered up, on behalf of the members of Synod and assembly, solemn prayer—in which he referred to the various subjects contained in the “Confession,” and earnestly implored forgiveness for the Church and the land, of manifold and aggravated transgressions. A holy dread of the Divine Majesty penetrated the hearts of many of the worshippers, and yet they felt that it was surely good to draw near to God, as humble penitents.

The concluding part of the service of this day was a discourse by the Rev. Robert Nevin, of Londonderry, founded on Genesis xxxv. 2, “*Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments,*” &c. In the illustration, he noticed—First, Some of the *spiritual idols that are to be relinquished*, in order to an acceptable approach to God; and Secondly, *The manner in which this important duty is to be performed*. Spiritual idols were referred to, under the heads of Self—the world—inordinate desires of the flesh and of the mind—formalism, hypocrisy, lukewarmness—making idols of means of grace and religious ordinances. Such evils are to be mortified and put away, in the spirit of true repentance—with strong faith—under abiding impressions of our own insufficiency for aught that is good—in dependence upon the sovereign grace of God—in joyful hope—with fervent zeal—and with a steadfast and constant spirit. Various evils in the Church were faithfully pointed out; and the discourse was characterized by the exhibition of a pointed testimony for truth—clear exposition of Scripture statements,—and suitable practical directions, in relation to the duty contemplated.

On Wednesday, the second day of meeting, and

that which had been fixed for Covenant-Renovation, the Synod first employed a short session in ascertaining those who were to join in the act of Covenanting, and in settling the order of procedure. A number of ruling elders from various congregations, who had been certified by their respective sessions, were declared to be eligible. Among these was *Mr. John Beattie*, of New Alexandria, Pennsylvania, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, who was cordially admitted.

The Rev. James Smyth commenced the public services of the day by prayer, and explaining, in appropriate terms, a portion of the 20th Psalm. The Rev. James Dick then preached on the Nature and Obligations of religious Covenants, from Nehem. ix. 38—“*And because of all this, we make a sure Covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*” From this subject, he illustrated at considerable length, and with much fulness and convincing argument, First, *The nature of the Covenant*. Here he showed that Covenanting is no sectarian practice—that God has never dealt with the human family but in the way of covenanting—that in all ages and countries, vowing and covenanting have been practised—that there is a clear and express warrant for the duty, both from the light of nature and from the sacred Scriptures; that Covenanting is in its nature moral, and not confined to any one region or people; and that the *Matter* of a Scriptural covenant is the most important that can be conceived. This he spoke of as a profession of belief in all revealed truth—as a cordial reliance on Divine promises—as an engagement to walk in the instituted means of grace, and to perform all required duties. It was then shown, That

our Covenants, National and Solemn League, are, in substance, none other than the covenant by which God's Church has been bound in every age.

Secondly, *The making of the Covenant* was considered. This was illustrated in the following observations. God himself, first of all, made his people's covenant. Had he not made it, they would have no right to enter into it. Man's making a covenant with God is just his acceptance of God's covenant. Persons in different offices and stations are the persons who covenant; and in making the covenant, all proper formality and solemnity are to be observed. Thirdly, *The Reasons* for covenanting were then clearly and forcibly exhibited. Of these the following were noticed—1. To put away all iniquity. 2. To walk before God in obedience to the moral law given to Moses. 3. Remembering manifold oppressions, in the hope that God would bless them, giving them grace to support trials, and that He would in due time grant them deliverance. Various *instances* of covenanting, mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and among the Reformed Churches in different countries were then considered, and the *occasions* on which faithful men betook themselves to this great duty were noticed. The *special call* to the Church at the present time to renew the covenant of their fathers was next pointed out. This was viewed as furnished by *defection* from covenanted attainments in the Churches, and the active *and untiring efforts of enemies* against the cause of God. The British Covenants are a tried barrier against the inroads of adversaries. The very treatment which our fathers' Covenants have received supplies a powerful reason for publicly acknowledging them. At all times when the Cove-

nant has been renewed in a proper spirit, God has approved of the transaction, and visibly owned those who engaged in it. In conclusion, *the Frame of spirit* in which we should covenant with God was considered—as consisting in reverence of the Divine Majesty—deep self-abasement—dependence on God—appropriating faith—the exercise of holy joy—the engagement of the heart and conscience to be God's for ever—and humble anticipation that God will bless us hereafter. This able discourse, which abounded in clear exposition of Scripture—convincing argument and faithful testimony-bearing, was listened to with profound and sustained attention by the large assembly, and appeared to make a deep impression, not only upon those who were immediately to engage in the act of covenanting, but likewise upon all who were present.

After a brief recess, the Rev. Doctor Stavely, who had been appointed to preside in the work of Covenanting, ascended the pulpit, and after praise and prayer, called upon the Rev. William Toland to read aloud the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Rev. William M'Carroll to read the Solemn League and Covenant. This being done, the ministers and elders proposing to join in the act, who were ranged in seats in the aisle, immediately before the pulpit, stood up; and Doctor Stavely read, in a solemn and distinct manner, the *Act of Covenant-Renovation*, as contained in a Bond, embodying the substance of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, adapted to the circumstances of the Church, and the present times. At each separate numbered paragraph, he lifted up his right hand, in token of swearing to the matters contained in the Bond, and at the same time, all the ministers and

elders likewise elevated their right hands, to signify their cordial joining in the same engagement; and at the close, all together pronounced a solemn and emphatic AMEN. The swearing of the covenant being finished, Dr. Stavely descended from the pulpit, and affixed his signature to the Bond, which had been carefully engrossed on a roll of parchment; and all the ministers, elders, and licentiates who had sworn the Bond, followed, severally attaching their names to the paper. Dr. Stavely then briefly addressed the assembly, speaking with special commendation of the becoming conduct and devout attention of the people, who were witnesses of the transaction. The scene was indeed very striking and impressive—forcibly reminding one of some of those favoured occasions, in which our Presbyterian forefathers publicly pledged their allegiance to Zion's Covenanted King. The day was calm and delightful—the sun breaking forth with mellow splendour about the time the discourse on Covenanting was commenced, and continuing to shed his beams upon the House of Worship, and surrounding grounds, and to gladden the assembly, till he sunk beneath the horizon. The dense congregation—consisting besides those in the neighbourhood, of many friends of the covenanted cause who had come from remote distances, and even of several brethren from Scotland—remained immoveable in their seats for many hours; and appeared, at different parts of the service, penetrated by deep devotional feelings. When the ministers and elders stood up and swore the Covenant, many of the spectators shed tears; and as they came forward to append their signatures, the act was witnessed with breathless attention. It was as if all felt that God was among his people of a

truth; and that an act had been performed, which tended to elevate and spiritualize the minds of all, and whose happy results would extend far beyond the present service, into future generations.

In the evening, the Rev. Samuel Simms preached from Psalm lxxvi. 11—“*Vow and pay unto the Lord your God.*” In discussing this subject, he considered, *First*, The *Doctrines* which those who had covenanted, had sworn to keep, and the *Practice* which they had sworn to observe. These doctrines were viewed as *Scriptural—Evangelical—Protestant—Presbyterian—and Covenanting*. Of *Duties* were particularly specified, *reading the Word, and secret prayer—family and social worship—public worship—all relative duties—and the diffusion of truth*. The *Reasons* why we should pay solemn vows were next exhibited. Our profession is scriptural—our privileges a blood-bought inheritance—our cause a covenanted cause; the past history of the world shows the importance of this cause; and the faithful maintenance of it is conducive to the glory of God, the good of our own souls, and the benefit of our native land. The *Manner* in which we are to maintain Christ’s cause was finally exhibited. We are required to hold it forth in its integrity—in sincerity—zealously—unitedly—in charity—perseveringly, against all opposition, and till death. The discourse contained a clear and faithful testimony in behalf of precious truth, and many striking illustrations; and was concluded with suitable exhortations and directions, addressed to those who had renewed solemn vows, and to all who were present.

The public religious services of this memorable day were concluded about seven o’clock in the even-

ing. Amidst the solemn calm of the closing day, the large assembly that had waited upon them for so many hours, with fixed attention, retired from the scene, under impressions of the peculiar favour of the God of their fathers, vouchsafed upon the occasion.

Immediately after the work of covenanting, the Synod made arrangements for extending the renewal of the Church's sacred vows to the various congregations. The Committee on Covenanting was instructed to prepare and publish, with as little delay as possible, a Narrative of the Synod's proceedings in the matter of Covenant-Renovation—to print documents for the benefit of the members of the Church—and to address to sessions and congregations such hints and directions, as would aid them in this important work. The Synod's expressed design, from its first proposal to renew the covenants, was that, as the whole membership of the Church had solemnly professed their belief in the perpetual obligation of these federal deeds, so they should enjoy the privilege of declaring this in the most explicit manner, by engaging in an act of public renovation. This they considered as clearly warranted, alike by the practice of faithful witnesses in former times, and especially by that of covenanting forefathers, and by the matter of the covenants themselves. The duties to which they bind are moral, and thus plainly obligatory upon persons in every relation. And the renewal of Scriptural covenants, which were at first *national* in their form, by Church courts, and members of the Church, so far from interposing an obstacle to the nation returning to a sense of its solemn vows, is an eminent means of promoting this great object. It raises up a stand-

ard for despised truth. When a nation has cast off its allegiance to Messiah the Prince, and perseveres in a course of covenant-violation, the appearance of even a few faithful ones assembled to avouch the Lord to be their covenant-God is fitted to arrest attention—to recal others from backsliding—and to show the value of a faithful testimony. The Spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against the enemy coming in as a flood, is the divinely-appointed means of effectually staying his progress, and of leading to his eventual overthrow. It is the Church's appropriate province and work to bear witness for neglected truth, and to essay the performance of important public duties; and her doing so has frequently been the means of awakening civil communities to a due sense of solemn engagements, and of recalling them to the way of holy obedience. With such views, the Synod sought to enlist the people under their care in the same service of covenant-renovation. When they resolved on engaging first in the work, in a Synodical capacity, they sought this as a high privilege for themselves; but likewise, at the same time, as an encouragement and example to the flock entrusted to them; and they aimed to bring the whole people, for whose welfare and advancement in holiness they were deeply concerned, to join themselves also to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. Their desire was to see the Church thus presenting the aspect of a peculiar people, dedicating themselves anew to the Lord—shining forth, as an example to other Churches, in “the beauty of holiness,” and bringing forth abundantly the precious fruits of covenant-obedience. The act of Synodical covenanting was followed by happy effects throughout the Church. The ministers and

elders felt themselves united more closely in the bonds of a holy brotherhood, and were prepared for more vigorous efforts and greater sacrifices, for the advancement of precious truths. The people, encouraged by the exhortations and examples of those who had the spiritual oversight of them, were excited to a higher measure of devotedness, in maintaining and advancing the testimony of Christ.

The Committee, soon after the meeting of Synod, issued a paper, containing suitable directions for the work of covenant-renovation in congregations;* and not a few betook themselves to serious and special preparation for the early performance of the great duty.

The preparatory services which preceded the work of congregational covenanting were calculated to be of singular benefit to the Church. They discovered a deep sense, generally entertained, of the great solemnity and importance of the work, and an earnest concern for the Divine presence and acceptance, with the fervent desire likewise that the occasion might prove a time of revival and refreshing from the Lord's presence, and might be followed by permanent and salutary results. The spirit of prayer was largely poured out. The ministers in their public ministrations, frequently directed the attention of the congregations to the nature and obligations of Scriptural covenants, and to the frame of spirit in which the work should be performed, and exhibited motives and encouragements to the duty. The work of covenanting frequently became the subject of spiritual converse and united prayer in the

* These directions were carefully considered by the several sessions; and while, in one or two points, some sessions adopted a slightly different method in the practical performance of the solemn service, they were, in general, readily adopted, and were found to be of much use in carrying forward the work.—See Appendix.

fellowship-meetings. The people were warned against engaging in the service in a formal or unconcerned manner, and were exhorted not to offer any part of the vow without a full understanding of its meaning and a sense of its obligation. The ministers and elders visited the different societies, and conversed with individuals, for the purpose of explaining the documents, and obviating objections. The members of the Church were put upon the work—most important and useful at all times—of searching the Scriptures and examining the history of the Church, to ascertain the way in which God had led his faithful people, in former times, to enter into covenant with Him—to learn the special call to the duty, and to gather direction and encouragement for its performance. It is believed that, during the months that preceded the renovation of the covenants, more was done to revive the knowledge of the principles of the Church's Testimony, and the spirit of faithful confessors, than had been accomplished for many years before. There were, moreover, indications, not a few, that these means of instruction were attended with the blessing from on high. It was gratifying to observe, in almost every instance, that as the period drew near, in which congregations were actually to engage in the work of covenanting, difficulties disappeared, and a spirit of deep solemnity, and of delightful harmony and fraternal affection seemed to pervade the people. The Lord opened up the path of his servants. Darkness became light before them, and crooked places were made straight. In some instances, a much larger number of young persons and others, than had been admitted at communions previously, sought the fellowship of the Church in congregations, before the act of

covenanting took place—under the view of the importance of the privilege, and the impression that they would not enjoy a similar opportunity again during their lives.

The first congregation that engaged in the work of Covenant-Renovation, pursuant to the directions of Synod, was that of KELLSWATER. It was befitting that this—one of the oldest congregations of the Covenanted-Church in this country, and that had always been distinguished by high privileges and by steadfast attachment to the testimony of Christ, should take a leading position in this important movement. From the first, the elders and people manifested entire unanimity and cordiality in the matter, and the performance of the duty was accompanied with abundant tokens of Divine direction and blessing. The various services connected with the work of covenanting in this congregation, were performed in the following manner. According to the directions of the Synod's Committee, a Sabbath of preparation and a day of special fasting and humiliation were publicly observed by the congregation, in a manner that bore a resemblance to the services preparatory to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. On the Sabbath preceding that on which the congregation renewed the covenants, a lecture was delivered by the pastor, on Joshua xxiv. 14—18, and afterwards the National Covenant of Scotland was read. In the afternoon, the minister preached on Joshua xxiv. 19, and then the Solemn League and Covenant was read. The Friday following was observed by the congregation as a day of public fasting and humiliation. On this occasion, a lecture was delivered from Daniel ix. 3—9,—and as an illustration of verse 5th, a part of "The Confession of Sins" was

read. The afternoon discourse was founded on Jeremiah xi. 10, and the remaining part of the "Confession" was read. The Session was then constituted—the Terms of Communion declared, and the "Act of Covenant-Renovation" read, and then tokens of admission to the ordinance of covenanting were dispensed. On Sabbath, April 2d, the congregation assembled for the great work of renewing the covenant of the God of their fathers. The pastor conducted the introductory exercises by offering up solemn prayer, commenting briefly in a suitable and practical manner on Leviticus x. 3, and explaining Psalm ciii. 13—19. After praise and prayer, the Rev. Thomas Houston, D.D. preached on Joshua xxiv. 15,—illustrating from this subject, at considerable length, the *Nature, Obligation, and Privileges* of public covenanting, and the *spirit* in which the service is to be performed. A brief interval followed. Before its expiration, the members of the congregation who proposed to take part in the work of covenanting, ranged themselves in the seats in front of the pulpit and on each side of it; and the pastor, after prayer and praise, delivered an Address, detailing the steps that had been taken by the Church, with reference to this special duty, and offering various suitable Scriptural directions and encouragements on the subject. The tokens were collected by the elders, during the celebration of praise. The whole congregation then stood up, worshipping God; and the pastor, from the pulpit, administered the oath to the covenanters, each individual lifting up his right hand at the close of each numbered section of the Bond; and at the conclusion of the whole, all the individuals covenanting, pronounced an audible Amen. About *Two hundred and twenty* persons

in all—a few of whom were very aged, and some in early youth, with much solemnity and readiness, engaged in the act of covenanting. After the swearing of the covenant by the congregation, the Minister and an elder, or a member from each fellowship-meeting of the congregation, publicly subscribed the Bond, and it was announced that the signing should afterwards be completed in the different societies. The pastor delivered a parting address, and the public services were concluded with prayer and praise by Mr. James Renwick Thompson, licentiate of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. The day was remarkably fine, and every thing within and without the House of worship was calculated to impress the mind with the conviction that the covenant God of his people was manifesting his special favour and blessing upon this solemn occasion.

Other congregations followed this good example, more or less speedily, as they could make arrangements for 'this purpose. All that engaged in it took pains previously to be fully instructed in the nature of the duty, and to have objections and scruples obviated; and they came forward to the act of covenanting with much apparent solemnity and cordiality. As the manner of performing the service in different places was similar, it is unnecessary to detail the proceedings in each particular case. In several instances, it was deemed most suitable to connect the work of covenanting with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper; and while the preparatory services were attended to, on the other days that are observed at such a season, the act of Covenant-Renovation was reserved for the last day of the sacramental feast, and was found to form an appro-

priate and very impressive conclusion of the holy solemnity. Several congregations of the Church that were destitute of fixed pastors, expressed the desire to enjoy the same privilege as their brethren elsewhere. This was readily granted by the Presbyteries under whose care they were placed; and after pains had been taken to instruct them in the nature and design of the work, they too, experienced a season of public dedication to be a time of refreshment and revival. In one instance—that of Loughmulvin, a part of Bready congregation, lying remote from the rest, the members sought and obtained a separate administration of the ordinance of covenant-renovation. In these instances, it was highly gratifying to observe, that the vacant congregations engaged in the work with equal, if not with even greater readiness than their more favoured brethren, who enjoyed a stated ministry. In some cases, it was testified, that not a single member who could possibly attend, was absent from the public assembly, at the time of renewing the Covenant, or refrained from taking part in the service. This good work was carried forward so successfully throughout the Church, that at the meeting of Synod, in 1855, it was reported, that in all the Presbyteries, a large majority of the congregations had then covenanted. Some that were prevented by the death of ministers, and other causes, from coming forward, have essayed the same service since. A very few have been hitherto hindered, from the advanced age or infirmities of their pastors. More than *two-thirds* of the whole congregations have already taken part in this important movement; while a congregation in England in connexion with the Synod, and the Mis-

sionaries and their flocks in the British North American Colonies, have manifested a readiness to take part in the public and explicit acknowledgment of the brotherly covenant.

To the praise of the grace and faithfulness of Zion's King, it deserves to be recorded that, in all the steps of preparation that were taken for covenanting in the various congregations, as well as in the solemn service itself, there was experienced no obstruction internal or external. There was "no breaking in, or going out"—there was "no complaining in our streets"; and it was felt by not a few that "*happy, indeed, is that people whose God is the Lord.*" While all that took part in the work of avouching the God of their fathers to be their God, were impressed with a deep sense of the greatness and importance of the duty, there was abundant evidence of the Lord's gracious presence with his people—dispelling fears—laying enemies under an arrest—strengthening his servants, and making them glad with the light of his countenance. Ministers and faithful elders, who looked forward to the work with anxious solicitude, enjoyed comfort and enlargement in solemn dedication, as they had manifold tokens of prayer being answered, and as they saw their people willingly offering themselves to the Lord. It furnished a refreshing and animating remembrance of seasons of covenanting and blessings that were vouchsafed to their fathers; and it afforded a bright prospect of times of promised enlargement to Zion—when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest—when through the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand

unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." *

SECTION VI.

THE EFFECTS OF COVENANT-RENOVATION—SPECIAL DUTIES INCUMBENT ON COVENANTERS.

THAT the faithful renewal of religious covenants has, in all past ages, been followed by salutary results, is attested by the whole history of God's people. Such an act implies repentance for former neglect and apostacy—the exercise of faith in God as a Covenant God and Portion—the dedication of the heart and life to Him—and an unfeigned purpose to walk before Him in all holy obedience. A return to the Most High is the fruit of Divine favour, and has ever been accompanied by tokens of Divine acceptance and blessing. Seasons of covenanting have been distinguished as times when the progress of backsliding was arrested, and enemies restrained. They have been eras of abounding purity, peace, and comfort in the fellowship of the Church—of earnest inquiry—of increased effort for the diffusion of truth—and of enlargement to Zion. Thus it was in the brightest periods of the history of God's ancient people, as in the days of Joshua, Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah. In the *covenanting times* of our fathers, as at the close of the sixteenth century—at the commencement of the Second Reformation, and in the days of the Westminster Assembly, the blessings that flow from federal dedication were abundantly enjoyed. Plenti-

* Isaiah xliv. 5.

ful showers of the Spirit descended to water the Lord's weary heritage. Our land was "married to the Lord," and was truly a land "delighted in." Sacred predictions declare that enlarged blessings shall be the fruit of public vowing in the latter period of the Christian economy. When "five cities in the land of Egypt" swear to the Lord, "in that day, shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."* When the Spirit is poured out, as water on the thirsty, and "floods on the dry ground," and one and another joyfully profess, "I am the Lord's," there is remarkable spiritual increase—"They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." And when the captives returning from Babylon excite and encourage each other to join themselves to the Lord in "a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten," enemies are brought down and confounded, and with joyful praise, the servants of God exclaim, "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness. Come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God."†

The instance of Covenant-Renovation which has been narrated in the preceding pages, has been already productive of various observable beneficial effects, which are worthy of distinct record, as illustrating the Divine established connexion of the blessing from on high resting upon a return to the way of holy obedience. That the gracious results are not more marked and numerous, is to be ascribed to the weakness of faith, and the want of a spirit

* Isaiah xix. 24, 25.

† Jeromiah l. 5 : ll. 10.

of heartfelt devotedness, which should flow from covenanting. Yet enough has been already enjoyed to show that the Lord has “remembered his covenant” for good to his people, and to encourage the expectation that He shall yet confer blessings more abundant upon those that have willingly avouched Him to be their God, and have vowed to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments always.

Of the salutary effects that have followed the act of covenanting by the *Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, we may briefly notice the following:—

1. *Greater steadfastness in the Church in maintaining a testimony for the truth.* Prior to the time when the Church’s attention began to be called to the work of Covenant-Renovation, the hearts of the faithful were grieved by various instances of defection from a covenanted standard. Brethren that had once walked with us turned aside, and made a schism in the Church. Several in the ministry, and licentiates and students, were induced to enter into other ecclesiastical connexions that promised them greater worldly support and emolument. Of the members of the Church, some were in danger of being led astray by the political movements of the day. The spirit of the age, shown in undervaluing important principles of a Scriptural testimony, and urging to union in the Church on the compromise of truth, misled others. While such movements were going forward, there were leading men in some of the larger ecclesiastical communities that did not conceal their sanguine expectation that, in a short time, the whole Covenanting Church would abandon their peculiar position; and would fully say a confederacy with them. The times were

ominous of radical changes. Certain public measures—such as Political Reform, and National Education by the State—and the adoption, in some sort, of the Westminster Standards, and the rejection of Erastian control, by large sections of the Presbyterian Church in this country, and in Scotland—with their increased exertions in the cause of Church Extension, and in that of Christian Missions at home and abroad—all tended to lead professed Covenanting witnesses to relinquish their peculiar position; and by fraternizing with others, to adopt a course that would conduct to popularity and worldly favour—and which held out the prospect of enlargement and increased usefulness. Such views were calculated to form a powerful temptation, and there is little doubt that they operated upon the minds of not a few who made defection from former covenanted attainments. They are, however, unscriptural and illusory. Our solemn duty at all times is, as declared by the Apostle, “*Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule: let us mind the same things.*” From regard to the authority of Zion’s King—for their own sakes—and to benefit others, faithful witnesses are required to “keep the word of Christ’s patience;” and to “hold fast” what they have, as they would be kept in “the hour of temptation.” Even in the reforms that in recent times have taken place in Ecclesiastical Bodies—in which we should sincerely rejoice—there are important principles respecting the Redeemer’s royal prerogatives, and the supremacy of his law, which are overlooked; and there are Scriptural duties and usages wholly neglected. By unfurling and publicly displaying a standard for truth—and continuing to maintain a distinct separ-

ation from corrupt systems, civil and ecclesiastical, Christ's witnesses may hope to bring others fully to embrace the truth, and to hasten the bright consummation—when “*the Lord shall be King over all the earth*”—“*when there shall be one Lord, and his name one.*”

The act of Covenant-renovation tended to foster deeply in the minds of those who engaged in it a sense of the value of the principles of the testimony of Christ, and to bind them to their faithful maintenance and general diffusion. The peculiar tenets and usages of covenanted witnesses were clearly seen to be no sectarian dogmas, nor to be of mere temporary or local interest. They are fundamental principles of universal concernment, and susceptible of the most extensive application. Already had the great articles of a testimony for truth prevailed over error and opposition. They had been sealed by the blood of many faithful confessors; and the predictions of sacred writ assure us of their future glorious triumph. Those who renewed the covenant regarded it as their honour and privilege to profess and firmly maintain these imperishable truths. Their purpose was declared as they vowed to the God of their fathers to hold fast his truth, and to continue steadfast in his ways—“*So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*” The course of defection has been arrested; and there is reason to believe that many, feeling the weight of their renewed sacred engagements, are firmly resolved, at whatever cost or allurements, to maintain Christ's cause, without wavering.

2. *A higher measure of brotherly love has been apparent throughout the Church.*

To cultivate the spirit of fraternal affection and

sympathy, and to manifest it by mutual seasonable counsel and support, was one distinct pledge given in the Covenant. The effect of this solemn engagement has already been perceived in the delightful harmony and unanimity that have characterized the courts of the Lord's house, and in the spirit of concord prevailing in the membership of the Church. A more active sympathy, too, with brethren in trial, and a more ready response to the calls of Christian benevolence, indicate the revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity. The increase and wider diffusion of this spirit will prove the internal strength of the Church. Its prevalence will furnish the Saviour's grand test of genuine discipleship—“*Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” And it will ultimately be a main instrumentality for converting the world to the acknowledgment of the truth of our holy religion, and to attract them to the fellowship of the Church—“*That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*”*

3. *Increased exertions for the spread of the truth, and the revival of practical godliness* have resulted from covenant-dedication. The recent act of covenanting assigned a prominent place to efforts for the spiritual observance of religious ordinances,—for the conversion of Jew and Gentile, and for the diffusion of a faithful testimony. The Covenanters thus vow—“*We solemnly engage, by our prayers, pecuniary contributions, and personal exertions, to seek the revival of true religion, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles; that men,*

* John xvii. 21.

both in their individual and national capacity, may submit themselves to the Redeemer, that men may be blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed." There has already been gratifying evidence afforded that this part of our sacred vow has been felt, in its constraining obligation on the hearts and consciences of many. The petition "*Thy Kingdom Come,*" occupying as it does, a prominent place in the Saviour's model of prayer, has come to be regarded as obliging to vigorous and sustained exertions, and to the consecration of worldly substance for the evangelization of the nations. Since the renewal of the covenants, a mission to the Romanists of Ireland has been originated or revived in the Church. A missionary has been ordained for this special work, and a Catechist—a convert from Popery, who is qualified to give instructions in the Irish language, has been employed. Two most important stations have been occupied—one in the metropolis, and the other in an interesting district in the west of Ireland. Though it is yet "a day of small things," in this important mission, it is matter of rejoicing that the Church has betaken herself to the performance of one chief work, contemplated in the British Covenants, namely the extirpation of Popish error and delusion from these covenanted lands. The spirit of fervent prayer cherished with special reference to this mission, and the engagement of a greater number of devoted labourers, in carrying it forward, cannot fail, under the Divine blessing, to be followed by valuable results, in the spread of evangelical truth, and the principles of genuine liberty throughout the benighted parts of Ireland.

The establishment of a *Theological Hall* in connexion with the Church in this country, is another

important result of Covenant-renovation. Such a measure had been contemplated for years before; but various obstacles prevented its attainment till the Synod had, in its associated capacity, engaged in covenant to be the Lord's, and had solemnly vowed to undertake, at whatever difficulty, any work that appeared to be required for the promotion of His glory. The unanimity with which this "School of the Prophets" was instituted—the anxious desire evinced throughout the Church to have the whole education and training of the future ministry under her own control, and the ready and prayerful support accorded to the seminary, afford encouraging promise that this measure is destined to be of lasting and extensive benefit, not only to the present but likewise to future generations.

The scheme for *Ministerial Support and Efficiency*—so auspiciously begun, and so vigorously and comfortably carried forward—resulted also from the work of Covenanting. To accord to a faithful ministry a liberal and honourable support is not only a dictate of reason and revelation, and a special ordinance of the Church's Head: it is, moreover, essential to the existence, increase, and efficiency of the ministry. This has been perceived and felt, as it never was in this country before, since the Church pledged anew its vow of allegiance to the King of Zion. All right-hearted men have confessed the urgent necessity of placing this matter on a right footing. The Christian liberality of the people has been drawn forth beyond expectation; and encouragement has been held forth to the youth of the Church, that, in devoting themselves to the ministry, they will receive an honourable support. Other important measures that have been contemplated,

and in part resolved upon, such as the adapting of the Testimony of the Church to her present position in Ireland—the emission of a revised Code of Discipline—the establishment of a Fund for superannuated ministers, and of another for the support of Ministers' Widows and families, exhibit the ready disposition with which a Church that has given itself in covenant to God, can enter upon new and untried efforts for the advancement of His glory. The spirit of prayer and holy exertion, resulting from the Divine blessing on covenant-dedication, and from a sense of the obligation of solemn vows, has led to such measures; and it is trusted that its increase and prevalence will further their happy accomplishment. Already, many throughout the Church have experienced that “*It is more blessed to give than to receive;*” and that it is a privilege of the highest kind to live and labour to promote the welfare of Christ's Church, and the universal establishment of His kingdom. Thus does it appear that the work of covenanting, in these recent days, has been followed by evident tokens of returning blessing and revival in the Church. Progress has been made in all that tends to the Church's internal prosperity and extension, in the short period since the work was essayed, much beyond what had taken place for many years previously. The faithful throughout the Church have been constrained to say, ‘The God of our fathers has remembered for us His holy Covenant.’ “*The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.*”

5. In conclusion, we remark, *That much remains yet to be done to attest the sincerity of the Church's renewed vows, and to accomplish the great objects contemplated in her Solemn Covenant.*

First, The grand principles of the British Covenants should be carefully studied, and means should be taken to make them more generally known. These principles are glorious and all-important, and are indispensable to the safety and prosperity of the Christian commonwealth. The Universal Headship of the Redeemer—the supremacy of the Word—the subjection of nations and their rulers to his sovereign authority—their paramount *obligation* to promote his honour, and to protect and foster his Church,—and the duty of all to whom Divine revelation comes, to profess and maintain the true religion, to oppose all error and idolatry, and to live godly lives—these, it must be admitted, are truths at once fundamental, and of universal and perpetual concern. Rightly understood and applied, they have the most extensive and salutary bearing. They are inseparably connected with other great truths, which lie at the basis of civil and ecclesiastical society; and the devout believer in Scripture cannot hesitate to declare that they shall one day be generally received, and shall, in their universal prevalence, purify and bless society. The vow to maintain these important doctrines implies an *intelligent acquaintance* with them, and an obligation, felt and acknowledged, to *propagate them as widely as possible*. Those who have voluntarily come under this obligation should labour after an enlarged knowledge of the grand truths of the covenanted reformation, and should consider themselves specially bound to impart it to others. This study will tend to elevate the intellect, by presenting to the mind subjects of contemplation of vast magnitude and great relative importance. Hitherto, the Church professing full adherence to the Covenanted

Reformation, has been sadly neglectful of the great duty of making known the principles of her testimony. The altered state of society, and the circumstances of the times—pregnant as they are with momentous changes—preceding a season of conflict, and the period of sowing the precious seed, which is to produce hereafter a rich harvest of blessing—require a bolder and more decided policy than has been hitherto pursued. It is not enough to emit a testimony, for the instruction of the members of the Church, or of the few that may be attracted to wait upon her ministrations, or to inquire after her fellowship. There should be means taken thoroughly to instruct the rising youth of the Church in the principles of the covenants of their fathers, and to communicate the same knowledge to others throughout society. It is indispensably required that witnesses should be intelligent, if they would be influential; and if fundamental truths are to be successfully defended, or are expected to leaven and bless society, they must be thoroughly understood and faithfully applied. It would be becoming those who have recently renewed the Covenant, to devise measures for publishing, in various forms, illustrations and vindications of its valuable principles; and it were worthy of the cause which the Church has avouched, to task all her available resources for this purpose. What may be the best method of pressing upon the attention of the nation, and of all classes throughout the community, from the highest to the lowest, the great truths of a martyr-testimony, it may not be, all at once, easy to determine. But let those who have anew pledged their allegiance to the King of Zion be fully persuaded of their paramount duty to make known His “light and saving health.” Let

them betake themselves to this as the special work of these last times; and a way will be opened up for its performance.* Thus will be accomplished the predictions concerning the Church's enlargement and blessing, in connexion with the diffusion of Scriptural light: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure."†

Again, *A higher measure of spirituality should be aimed after, by ministers and people, in all their ministrations, and in all intercourse in the Church.* The mere profession of theological doctrine, however orthodox, or of the principles of a testimony, however excellent, without corresponding holiness and spirituality of heart and life, can never be productive of any extensive salutary effects. Those who have openly dedicated themselves in covenant to God, should consider themselves bound

* Daniel xii. 4. Isaiah xxxiii. 6.

† The Reformed Church in France, in the early period of its history, affords a fine instance of an earnest concern to spread the principles of its testimony, and of active measures taken for the exhibition and vindication of precious truths. At the meetings of its National Assembly, certain works were agreed upon, as needful to be written for the advancement or defence of the Reformation—able ministers were appointed to prepare them, and were freed from other labours, and supplied with suitable means while engaged in this service—and the Church took upon itself the expense and labour of publishing and circulating such works. In this way, the truth was powerfully promoted, and the early literature of this branch of the Reformed Church—from the first exposed to fierce persecution—is most valuable and interesting. A similar course adopted by the Covenanting Church in our day might be productive of important benefits. At least, the publication of a *series of Tracts*, illustrating and vindicating the doctrines of grace, and the great truths of her testimony—and exhibiting and enforcing religious ordinances, and the duties of practical godliness—and the organization of a scheme of cheap publications might be readily effected—and might prove of great service to the rising youth, and to inquirers.

to walk before Him in all the ways of godliness. They should imbibe and display the mind of Christ. The plentiful effusion of the Spirit from on high has eminently distinguished past times of Covenanting; and like the fire that anciently came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices, it has been the token of Divine acceptance. It has likewise been the grand agency in conducting to a prosperous issue, the designs proposed in these federal transactions. Spirituality if duly cultivated will discover itself in habits of self-examination—the devotional reading of the word—and frequent prayer. The tone of conversation will be humble, loving and edifying; and intercourse with fellow-Christians will be conducted so as to impress the mind with the awful reality and importance of Divine things, and to excite to all godly practice. The Spirit—the grand promise of the last times, should be fervently sought for the Church. His gracious indwelling and powerful presence are the grand evidence of union to Christ, and the source of all blessing to believers. *“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field.”*

We who have publicly entered into covenant with God should not only plead the promise of the Spirit's plentiful outpouring, and wait for it—we should ourselves aim always to walk in the exercise of the Spirit's holy graces. We are required not only to “live in the Spirit,” but also to “walk in the Spirit”—avoiding whatever would grieve Him, and, by a conversation in heaven, and the active, vigorous and constant display of a temper and disposition becoming our solemn profession, showing that

we are indeed “temples of God,” and a “habitation of God through the Spirit.” Such a frame habitually cherished and displayed would greatly conduce to our own comfort and assured hope ; and would powerfully recommend the excellence of our profession to others. Sacred predictions assure us that the presence of the Holy Spirit, producing these effects in the hearts and lives of professed Christians, will be a principal blessing flowing from covenant-dedication in the latter days—“*According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.*”* “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”†

Furthermore, Those who have renewed their vows to the Most High, should consider themselves *bound to carry out the designs of the Covenant, in increased, devoted exertions to advance the cause and kingdom of Christ.* This they have explicitly engaged to do in the act of covenanting. One of the special vows of those who have taken the Bond, pledges them to this great duty; and its whole spirit and principles aim at the same all-important object. The grand articles of our fathers’ covenant are opposed to long-established and prevailing systems of error; and they should be resolutely displayed to confront and overcome them. Witnesses that have been signally owned of God in past conflicts were distinguished for self-denial, holy decision, and the

* Haggal ii. 5.

† Isaiah lix. 21.

cheerful sacrifice of all personal worldly interests, through their earnest concern to advance the cause of truth and righteousness. “*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death.*”* The present age demands devoted effort on the part of all who would be honoured as instruments for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. By maintaining a holy separation from all corrupt and immoral systems in Church and State, they should aim to walk with undefiled garments. They should be characterized by fervent and enlightened zeal, and be ever distinguished by a public spirit. Our time—worldly substance—and opportunities of usefulness are talents entrusted to us by our exalted Lord; and we are under obligation to lay them out for the promotion of his glory, as we expect at last to have to render to Him a certain and particular account of our stewardship. Our high religious privileges greatly increase this obligation. Especially should the manifold tokens of the Divine favour enjoyed in the recent act of covenanting, constrain us to earnest, self-denying and sustained exertions for the advancement of the best of causes. We were permitted to engage in the solemn transaction without let or hinderance. Enemies were restrained, fears dissipated, and through the good hand of our fathers’ God upon us—all was peaceful, encouraging, and refreshful. A sense of abundant goodness should impel us to carry out the purpose of our dedication, in pleading more earnestly, labouring more faithfully—and giving more cheerfully than we have ever yet done, for the promotion of the Redeemer’s glory throughout the earth. The times

* Revelation xii. 11.

are eminently favourable for sustained holy efforts, for the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. Society is everywhere characterized by earnest activity. Many "wide doors" are thrown open before the Church,—there are many fields already white to the spiritual harvest. It is a period, too, of enlarged Christian liberality; and though covenanting witnesses in our times have not hitherto manifested much of that spirit which makes costly sacrifices for the advancement of truth, there are yet some encouraging indications that He "whose is the silver and the gold" is disposing his servants to consecrate their gain to the Lord, and to esteem it a high privilege to dedicate their worldly substance to his service. Were all who recently renewed the Covenant to consider their special obligations to pray fervently—devote their substance, and employ personal exertion for promoting Christ's cause, we cannot doubt that the principles of our Covenants would be more widely diffused and more generally embraced. We should always remember that God's settled ordinance is that the Church is destined to be the instrument of her own enlargement—that "the liberal shall be made fat," and that they that water others shall be themselves "watered." Former seasons of covenanting—as at the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness—at the season of Pentecost, and in the times of Revival, have all been characterized by enlarged liberality, and increased holy effort. It concerns us to exhibit like precious fruits of our recent singular privileges; and, in constant remembrance of our sacred vows, to regard it as our highest honour to pray, and labour, and spend for the establishment of our Lord's cause and kingdom in the earth. "*They shall build the*

*old wastes; they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities—the desolations of many generations.”**

Finally—Covenanting should be improved *by anticipating the day of promised enlargement and blessing, and preparing for its coming.* That the Lord will bring again Zion, and restore her captivity as streams of water in the south, is matter of joyful and assured promise. The time to favour Zion is appointed, and there are certain tokens of its near approach. The servants of God even now “take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.”† Evil systems are tottering to their downfall. The cup of Babylon’s wickedness is full to overflowing; and her fearful plagues hasten apace. Faithful witnesses have nearly *finished their testimony*; and though a brief period of severe suffering may await them, the cause which they maintain shall speedily triumph; and they themselves be exalted to power and dignity, in the sight of their enemies.‡ Those who have taken hold of God’s covenant, and yielded themselves to the Lord should fix their minds on the coming deliverance and glory. They should “arise and shine.” For Zion’s sake they should not rest, nor for Jerusalem’s sake should they “hold their peace.”§ Girding their loins for the approaching conflict, they should take to them “the whole armour of God,” that they “may be able to withstand in the evil day.” Keeping the word of Christ’s “patience,” they shall be preserved from “the hour of temptation.”|| With steadfast faith, they should rest on the gracious promises respecting Zion’s deliverance and blessing—and

* Isaiah lxi. 4. † Psalm cii. 14. ‡ Rev. xi. 11, 12.
§ Isaiah lxii. 2. || Revelation iii. 10.

should turn them into fervent prayers. Standing on their watch tower, they should wait for the appointed vision, and hail the first streaks of the dawn—the light breaking upon the distant mountains, as the harbinger of a day of brightness and glory. We who have entered into covenant with God, and who have willingly devoted ourselves and all we have to Him should seek to *antedate the Millennium*, by walking in the Spirit—setting our affections on things above,—and abounding in the work of the Lord. The Church is called everywhere to put on her beautiful garments, and to appear in her true character,—reflecting the glory of her exalted Head, and shining in the splendour of moral and spiritual excellence. “OUT OF ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD HATH SHINED.” “*Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*”*

Thus improved, our sacred federal Bond will prove an eminent means of revival to the Church. It will furnish a powerful argument in prayer for more abundant blessings; and when the trials and conflicts of Christ's witnesses shall have been finished, and the cause which they maintained, shall have gloriously triumphed, then shall the faithfulness of God in covenant towards his people be brightly manifested. “*I will set a sign among them, . . . and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all their brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations . . . to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the*

* Psalm l. 2; Song vi. 10.

*Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.’’**

* Isaiah lxvi. 19—23.

APPENDIX.

NO. I.—PERMANENT OBLIGATION OF THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.

It is not unusual at present to find individuals and religious parties expressing respect for the Solemn League and Covenant—and admiration of those who entered into it, in a bypast age; and yet, at the same time, altogether refusing to admit its permanent obligation. This does Dr. REID virtually, in his "History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland"; and Presbyterians who incorporate with a civil system which is essentially unscriptural, Prelatic and Erastian, are of necessity obliged to take the same position. The late venerable Dr. M'Crie, in his "Discourses on the Unity of the Church," (pp. 164, 165,) thus ably shows the grounds of maintaining the continued obligation of this memorable Bond:—"The permanent obligation of the Solemn League results from the permanency of its nature and design, and of the parties entering into it, taken in connexion with the public capacity in which it was established. Some talk of it as if it were a mere temporary expedient to which our forefathers had recourse in defending their civil and religious liberties; and when they have paid a compliment to it in this point of view, they think they have no more concern with the matter. This is a very narrow and mistaken view of the deed. The most momentous transactions, and deeply and durably affecting the welfare and the duty of nations and of churches, may be traced to the influence of the extraordinary and energetic circumstances of a particular period. The emergency which led to the formation of the Covenant is one thing, and the obligation of that covenant is quite another: the former might

quickly pass away, while the latter may be permanent and perpetual. Nor is the obligation of the Covenant to be determined by the temporary or changeable nature of its subordinate and accessory articles. Whatever may be said of some of the things engaged to in the Solemn League, there cannot be a doubt that, in its great design and leading articles, it was not temporary but permanent. Though the objects immediately contemplated by it—religious reformation and uniformity—had been accomplished, it would still have continued to oblige those who were under its bond to adhere to and maintain those attainments. But unhappily there is no need of having recourse to this line of argument: its grand stipulations remain to this day unfulfilled. The Solemn League was a national covenant and oath, in every point of view,—in its matter, its form, the authority by which it was enjoined, the capacities in which it was sworn, and the manner in which it was ratified. It was a sacred league between kingdom and kingdom, in respect to their religious, as well as their secular interests; and, at the same time, a covenant in which they jointly swore to God to perform all the articles contained in it. National religion, national safety, liberty, and peace were the great objects which it embraced. It was not a mere agreement or confederation (however solemn) of individuals or private persons (however numerous), entering spontaneously and of their own accord into a common engagement. It was framed and concluded by the representatives of kingdoms, in concurrence with those of the Church; it was sworn by them in their public capacity; at their call and by their authority, it was afterwards sworn by the body of the people in their different ranks and orders; and, finally, it was ratified and pronounced valid by laws both civil and ecclesiastical. The public faith was thus plighted by all the organs through which a nation is accustomed to express its mind and will. Nothing was wanting to complete the national tie, and to render it permanent, unless it should be maintained that absolute unanimity is necessary, and that a society cannot contract lawful engagements to God or man, as long as there are individuals who oppose and are disobedient. Sanctions less sacred, and pledges less numerous, would have given another nation, or even an individual, a perfect right to demand from Britain the fulfilment of any treaty or contract; and shall not God, who was not only a witness but the principal Party, and whose honour and interest were immediately concerned in this transaction, have a like claim; or shall we ‘break the covenant and escape?’ ”

NO. II.—SPECIAL CALLS TO COVENANTING.

THE Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod on Covenanting, in a circular addressed to the Sessions of the different congregations, calling upon them to observe a day of Special Fasting and Prayer, for seeking the guidance and support of the Church's Head, in relation to the work of Covenant-Renovation, mention the following reasons, as constituting a distinct call to engage in the duty at the present time:—

“Dear Brethren,—You will probably think with us, that such as respect and love our Zion's Covenanted Testimony require to be gathered more closely together—that the bonds of brotherhood require to be strengthened—that this Church requires to have her sense of obligation, arising out of her covenant engagements, deepened, her spirit quickened, her energies aroused, and her determination fixed; and is there not reason to believe that the Renovation of the Covenants is a proper means by which to seek the attainment of these things?

“Again, when we look abroad, what do we behold?—The most evangelical Churches, with few exceptions, are confederate with the State by oaths and gifts, and giving their influence to uphold and perpetuate Prelacy and Erastian Presbyterianism in these realms. The Established Church, instead of being the bulwark of Protestantism, has, to a woful extent, become a nursery for Antichrist, while Romanism, emboldened by the countenance of the State, and the hundreds that have been added to its ranks, has assumed such an arrogant bearing, and adopted such measures of aggression, as not only warrant, but imperatively call on Protestants of every shade to adopt the most efficient measures of opposition to one of the greatest enemies to God and his cause that exists on earth; and what measure so becoming the descendants of covenanted ancestors as the renewal of their covenants? What more becoming and effective testimony could be lifted against the threatening power of Antichrist, and the arrogant assumptions of Prelacy—what better adapted to reprove the unfaithfulness of such as have abandoned valuable reformation attainments, and to direct others to the good old platform, on which the truth was maintained and the battle of civil and religious liberty successfully fought, against arbitrary power and Prelatical intolerance in a bygone age?”

No. III.—NATIONAL COVENANTS MAY BE RENEWED
NOT IN A NATIONAL CAPACITY—AND THE
SEASONABLENESS OF THE DUTY.

THE following statements, extracted from the Doctrinal Part of the "Testimony of the Original Seceders," on these subjects, are judicious and deserving of serious attention :—

"In opposition to those who deny that National Covenants can be renewed unless it be done nationally, WE DECLARE,

"That as, in national vows for promoting religious reformation in countries where the Church is in an organized state, she is supposed to take the lead in the service, the civil authorities of the nation, and the body of the people concurring with her, and entering into the oaths; and as these vows are binding in all moral respects, not only upon the nation as a whole, but also upon the several parts of which it is composed; so it must be competent to the Church, or any part of her adhering to the covenanted cause, though a minority of the nation, when the majority, including their rulers, refuse to concur in the service, to renew these vows ecclesiastically, by recognizing their continued obligation, and entering into a bond, suited to her circumstances, to prosecute the ends of them.

"In support of the above statement we observe, That the renewal of national covenants, even by a minority of the nation which originally entered into them, is sanctioned by the approved example of God's ancient people; That all their covenanting with God, after they entered the land of Canaan, reduplicated upon the federal transaction of the twelve tribes at Horeb; That after the apostacy of the ten tribes, the tribe of Judah, though a minority of the original nation of Israel which covenanted at Horeb, renewed that covenant in the days of Asa, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, and Josiah; and that this was done by them not only when they had a king of their own nation to take a lead in the service, but also when under a foreign yoke, as appears from the covenanting of the captives after their return from Babylon.*

"In opposition to those who deny the present *seasonableness of public religious covenanting*, or who leave it undecided whether it is reasonable at present or not, WE DECLARE,

* 2 Chron. xv. 12—15; xxiii. 16; xxix. 10; xxxiv. 29—34; Neh. ix. 38; x.

"That although public religious covenanting is not an ordinary duty, yet it is a service eminently called for at present from the circumstances of the Church and the Nation to which we belong.

"In support of this assertion we observe, That nature itself teaches, that if we have violated a lawful covenant, it is dutiful to renew it, with an acknowledgement of our sin in having broken it: That all ranks in these lands having departed in principle and practice from a reformation formerly attained, and violated the vows by which it was consolidated, the renovation of these is highly seasonable as a means of awakening the present generation to a sense of their sin and danger, and of exciting them to remember whence they have fallen, and to do the first works: That as one end of social covenanting is the confirmation of Christians in the present truth, so it must be a seasonable service at present, when the great body of Christians are like children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and when error is coming in upon the Church like a flood: That the great alienation of affection, and mutual jealousies, which prevail among professed Christians, call loudly for this service, as a means eminently calculated to restore public confidence, to heal divisions, and to cement religious society: That as all ranks in these lands are bound by the vows of their ancestors to adhere to the Westminster formularies as standards of uniformity, and as there is a strong tendency at present to union, to the prejudice of these standards,—so to counteract that tendency, and to give the disposition for union a proper direction, the friends of the reformation have a special call to renew the pledge of adherence to them given by their reforming ancestors: That, as public religious covenanting was a means remarkably blessed by God in the days of our fathers, for delivering these lands from antichristian tyranny and superstition, and for carrying on a work of reformation—so the danger to which the Reformation interest in these lands is exposed, from the rapid increase of Popery, and the countenance it is receiving from persons of all ranks, is a special call in providence to all the friends of the reformation, to come forward and renew the federal deeds of our ancestors, which have so often proved the bulwarks of our civil and religious liberties, as a special means of preventing us from being again brought under the yoke of Rome: Finally, That it is the business of the Church to point out the seasons when this duty is specially called for, and doctrinally and judicially to inculcate the practice of it; and that to admit its morality, and yet to leave the sea-

sonableness of it undetermined, or to make the performance or non-performance of it matter of judicial forbearance, is to act in direct opposition to the commandment of Christ, 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' Matt. xxviii. 20."

NO. IV.—DIRECTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF SYNOD FOR CONGREGATIONAL COVENANTING.

THE following Circular, which was issued by the Synod's Committee on Covenanting, proved useful to Congregations in essaying the work of Covenant-Renovation :—

*To the Rev. _____ with the Elders and Members
of the Congregation of _____*

REV. BROTHER AND DEAR BRETHREN,

The Reformed Presbyterian Synod, at its late meeting at Dervock adopted a minute containing a recommendation to Presbyteries and Sessions to use diligence to prepare the congregations under their care for following up the work so auspiciously begun by Synod.

Synod's Committee on Covenant-Renovation, desirous to aid congregations in carrying out this recommendation, beg most respectfully to submit to you the following hints, adopted at their meeting, held on the 7th instant, which, it is hoped, may be useful, at least in contributing to uniformity in the manner of renewing the Covenants in the several congregations :—

1. *Respecting Ministers and Elders who had Covenanted at Derrock.*

As congregational covenanting is but carrying out the work begun at Dervock, and as oaths should not be unnecessarily multiplied, Committee do not deem it expedient that the minister presiding, and such elders as had previously taken the oath, should repeat it, but would recommend them to go before the congregation in subscribing the bond.

2. *Respecting Females.*

Committee see no ground for excluding females, as such, from covenanting personally, and in the same manner as the males.

3. *Should the work of renewal be connected with the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper?*

Though some may find it expedient to connect the administration

of this ordinance with that of the Supper, yet we believe that, in general, the services specially belonging to a communion are sufficient for the season ; and it would be better, at another time, to set apart one of the six working days to be observed as a day of humiliation. On that day let the "Confession of Sins," approved by the Church, be read and embodied in confession, in solemn prayer to God. On the evening of that day, as before a communion, let tokens of admission be distributed, in a constituted Session, to such as shall be admitted to the ordinance of Covenanting to be observed on the following Sabbath.

4. Order to be observed in renewing the Covenants in congregations.

Committee recommend two ministers to co-operate on such an occasion, at least on the day of Covenanting.

The services of the Sabbath may be—introductory religious exercises, by the pastor ; a discourse, suited to the work in hand, by his assistant ; the exercises of that part of the day being closed in the usual way.

After inter-mission.

Let the persons having tokens of admission occupy that part of the house allotted to them, the tokens being taken up in the way that may be most convenient.

After prayer and praise, the pastor shall deliver a practical prefatory address, and administer the ordinance by reading the bond, the whole congregation standing. The persons covenanting shall lift and hold up the right hand during the reading of the section immediately preceding No. I, beginning with, "We, therefore, with all reverence and humility, &c." The hand shall also be lifted when the minister shall pause at the close of each numbered section ; and, at the close of the reading of the bond, let an audible Amen be pronounced.

For the greater convenience, a few may subscribe in the house of worship, and the rest in their societies, and as soon as possible, that the paper may in a few weeks be returned to Sessions.

The well-known ability and zeal of the brethren in the ministry render it unnecessary for Committee to point out the means to be used to enable the people generally to comprehend the nature of the ordinances—to bring them to a thorough understanding of the matter of the Covenants—to show them reasons for the present renewal—

the motives by which they should be influenced—and the objects at which they should aim.

Some may depend mainly on adapting public ordinances to the attainment of their object, and some may deem it necessary to come in closer contact with the people in their ordinary social meetings, or in meetings convened for the purpose, where the minister will have an opportunity of ascertaining, by examination, the knowledge and spirit of the people, giving explanations, answering objections, resolving doubts, and tendering to each such advice and counsel as his case may require.

Feeling the responsibility of our position, and the importance to the Church of a proper improvement of the time that may elapse before the renewal shall take place, we cannot refrain from offering, in the close, a few words of counsel to dear brethren about to renew their Covenants, in regard to the inward and spiritual, as we have already done in regard to the outward and formal.

1. Read attentively the "Confession" now in your hands : carefully consider and endeavour to attain to a proper sense of the heinousness of the sins confessed—national, ecclesiastical, and personal. Consider how much they are fitted to draw down Divine judgments on these lands, and lay to heart the goodness of God, manifested in His forbearing to inflict merited punishment.

Lay the "Act of Covenant-Renovation" before you ; read and ponder it, section by section ; endeavour to comprehend, in their fullest extent, the duties, and to understand the doctrines to which it binds.

2. Enter heartily and sincerely into the work of self-examination ; inquire in regard to the presence of a living faith appropriating Christ and all new Covenant blessings—true evangelical repentance, abounding love, the obedience of faith, and hearty approval of the principles and duties of a Covenanted testimony.

See that your determination to abide by the profession set forth in the bond be formed deliberately on the authority of the Word of God, and in dependence on the grace of God, and the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit. Surrender yourselves to Christ without reserve, remembering His own very solemn words—"He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it ; and he that loseth his life for

my sake shall find it." "We beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Finally, dear brethren, be much engaged in prayer in your societies, your families, your closets. Come to God in earnest, believing prayer: doubt not the fulfilment of His fullest, richest promises. You dishonour Him by doubting. Has He not said, "Ask, and it shall be given you?" "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Yours in the Lord,

JAMES DICK, *Convener.*

WILLIAM RUSSELL, *Secretary*

Dec. 1853.

NO. V.—CONFESSION OF SINS.

BELIEVING that we are authorised by the Word of God, and called, by Divine providence, to the solemn work of Covenant Renovation, and being persuaded that it is a necessary preparation to so great and solemn a duty, that we be duly sensible of, and humbled for, our own and the nation's sins, and that we freely and fully confess them; therefore, professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and reliance on His grace who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins, we do confess our own and our fathers' sins, the sins of the Churches and the nation, in consequence of which we, and the people among whom we dwell, have been exposed to many spiritual plagues and outward judgments.

1st, With shame and confusion of face, we confess and lament *the national provocations of these lands*. We have done wickedly, our kings, our princes, our nobles, our judges, our magistrates, our ministers, and our people. Though the Lord hath long and clearly spoken unto us, we have not hearkened unto His voice, and though He hath followed us with providential goodness and tender mercies, we have not been allured to wait on Him, and to walk in His ways. Though He hath stricken us, we have not grieved; we have not remembered to render to the Lord according to His goodness, and according to our own vows and promises.

Especially, we confess and lament that these nations have perfidiously cast off their allegiance to Messiah, the Prince of the kings of the earth, by abandoning the National Covenants, and have not only broken solemn vows, sworn before God, angels, and men, but have persevered in courses of defection, on account of which the Lord's hand is heavy upon us.

At the close of the Second Reformation period, the stated enemies of a covenanted work of reformation were, in palpable violation of vows recently renewed, and despite the protest of God's faithful servants, admitted to places of authority and trust in the nation; and the general national defection was still more deplorably manifested at the Restoration, when, by public measures of unexampled perfidy, the legal securities which had been previously given to covenanted attainments were swept away, Presbyterial order was overthrown, and abjured Prelacy set up in its stead, the Covenants of our fathers were declared to be unlawful oaths, and ignominiously burned, and, by the assertion of the blasphemous supremacy of the Crown, the Headship of Christ, and the independence of His Church, were wickedly invaded.

We lament, moreover, the aggravated and complicated national wickedness which followed those steps of backsliding, in the long and bloody persecution of Christ's faithful witnesses—in the imposition of sinful and ensnaring oaths, declarations, and bonds—in the indulgences offered, on sinful conditions, by Erastian supremacy, and readily accepted, as well as in the toleration issued by a Popish monarch, in furtherance of Popish objects, and thankfully acknowledged by almost all the Presbyterian ministers and people.

Furthermore, we mourn that, at the time of the Revolution, when the Lord wrought a great deliverance for the nation from arbitrary power and Popish oppression, there was not a return to former Scriptural attainments; on the contrary, the nation sinned yet more, by leaving untouched all that was done against the covenanted work of reformation, by public acts at the Restoration, and by retaining in the statute-book the Act Rescissory, by which valuable reformation attainments were condemned and set aside, by establishing an unscriptural supremacy in the settlement of the Crown, and by introducing an oath of allegiance instead of the oath of our Covenant, which was regarded as exhibiting, on a Scriptural and constitutional basis, the relation and duties of rulers and people in the reforming period, and binding both to discharge their respective

duties, consistently with their allegiance to the Prince of the kings of the earth.

We regret still further the sins committed by the British nation, in framing the Incorporating Union between England and Scotland, in open violation of a principal article of the national vows, inasmuch as an essential condition of it is the perpetual establishment of Prelacy in England and Ireland, and in enacting the law of Patronage in Scotland, whereby, in opposition to the Word of God, the people are denied the choice of their pastors, and a wide door is opened for the entrance of an unworthy ministry. While, in accordance with the Solemn League and Covenant, we desire the union of these three kingdoms on the basis of Scriptural truth, we lament that the nation is again pledged, in opposition to our solemn vows, by the Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland, to perpetuate and support the Prelatical establishment—a system not only unscriptural, but intolerant and oppressive. We also grieve for the sin of the nation in requiring many unnecessary and sinful oaths, as essential to qualify persons for holding office in the public service. We lament that the administration, equally with the constitution of the British empire, is in opposition to the authority of the Mediator, and conducted on principles at variance with the sacred Scriptures, the statute-book of Heaven.

Rulers, supreme and subordinate, are elected to office who are devoid of Scriptural qualifications, and many of them are irreligious, infidel, and immoral. The requirements of God's Word are overlooked equally by those who choose and those who are chosen. Papists, open enemies of Scriptural truth, have, by the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, been raised to power, and exalted to a place in the councils of the nation; and Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, and Infidelity, exercise a preponderating influence in the administration of the affairs of the nation, not only preventing the progress of evangelical truth, but likewise provoking the Most High to send upon us heavy and repeated judgments. The nation, by its rulers, makes no proper acknowledgment of the Lord's Anointed, but is often found in league with His enemies, and in open hostility to His laws and the interests of His kingdom. Wicked and idolatrous systems are fostered and encouraged by the State, and the national treasures applied to their support. While public endowments are given to ministers of evangelical sentiments, and to the abettors of Socinian and Arian heresies, on principles sinful on the part of the

State, the recipients are not only degraded, but involved in the sin of the rulers. Public property is largely appropriated to uphold an unscriptural hierarchy in England and Ireland, and an Erastian Presbyterian establishment in Scotland, to endow the Popish College of Maynooth, to support the Popish hierarchy in Canada and Malta, and to propagate the destructive delusions of Popery in other British colonies and dependencies.

We lament the defects and evil principles of many of the educational institutions of the nation, and particularly of the Queen's Colleges and National System of Education for Ireland. The Word of God is dishonoured by not being recognised as the basis of moral and religious instruction, and by the restrictions placed on it in these seminaries. Neither is there provision made to secure for the pupils sound instruction in religion and morality, while, by the regulations of both colleges and schools, error is protected. We deplore the sin of the nation in its connexion with these things, and especially the sanction and encouragement given to the National System by evangelical Christians of different denominations.

Furthermore, we confess and lament the prevalence and increase, throughout these lands, of many gross immoralities, the fruits of national apostacy. The Sabbath of the Lord is grievously desecrated by the transmission of the mail, the opening of post-offices and news-rooms, and the running of Sabbath trains on railways, which modes of Sabbath profanation, being sanctioned by the civil rulers, gives encouragement to increasing disregard of the sanctity of the Lord's day by all ranks in the community.

To national perjury has been added a vast multiplicity of unnecessary oaths, often taken without any due sense of the object of worship, and in a superstitious manner. Profane swearing, drunkenness, and oppression, greatly abound. The idols of political expediency and national glory are more regarded than the authority and honour of the Moral Governor of the nations, or than the claims of philanthropy. Legislation at home, and intercourse with other nations, are not conducted to promote the kingdom of Christ, but to uphold and perpetuate systems which the Lord will destroy with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. A flood of profaneness and wickedness overspreads the whole land; persons of all ranks have corrupted their ways; "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." All these our public sins are greatly aggravated on account of the singular privileges which Britain has long enjoyed, in being favoured with the pure light of the Gospel,

and in providential preservation and prosperity, and by the mournful impenitence of all classes under recent solemn judgments. For all these aggravated evils we desire to be sincerely grieved in heart; and, while we sigh and weep for the abominations that are done in the land, we confess that, by our own unfaithfulness, we have had a part in national provocations, and that we deserve to share in national judgments.

2d, With sorrow of heart, we bewail the existence of many and great errors in doctrine and order, and evils in practice *among the Churches throughout these lands*. While at the Revolution, the nation showed no disposition to return to a sense of Covenant-obligation to the Lord, the Presbyterian Church shared in the guilt, by accepting the civil establishment without remonstrating, in an ecclesiastical capacity, against what was unscriptural and defective in it, or making any acknowledgment of former mournful backslidings and oppressions. It became a partaker in the aggravated sin of the State in retaining the Act Rescissory, by offering no reclamation against it. It also refused, by any public act, to acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, or explicitly to approve of the Covenanted attainments of a former period. It accepted from the hands of an unscripturally constituted State its doctrinal confession, leaving other essential parts of a glorious reformation buried in oblivion, and virtually rejected. It grievously failed adequately to assert, and faithfully to carry out in practice, the following great principles:—The exclusive Headship of Christ, the Divine right of Presbyterian Church-government, and the intrinsic power of the Church to hold her own ecclesiastical assemblies. Instead of acting on these noble principles, it meanly succumbed to various gross Erastian encroachments of the State; and, by admitting into ecclesiastical offices, at the dictation of Erastian rulers, known enemies of the Covenanted Reformation, and persecutors of God's people, and neglecting to exercise discipline upon the erroneous and the immoral, the Revolution Church receded from the ground of the former blessed Reformation, encouraged the nation and its rulers in apostacy, and opened the door for the mournful backslidings and defections that have ever since characterised the Churches of Britain.

The Headship of Christ over the Church and the nation has been infringed, the Covenants of our fathers have been abandoned by nearly all the Churches that had acknowledged them, and the su-

preme authority of the Divine Word, in its application to doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Churches in these lands, is lamentably disregarded.

We lament that, within the pale of the Episcopal Establishment, some of the worst errors of Popery have been spreading, and Episcopal dignitaries have done nothing to arrest the evil; but, on the other hand, have sought to oppress conscientious individuals within the Establishment who have dissented from some of its unscriptural doctrines and usages, and have displayed intolerance towards dissenters without its pale. The Presbyterian Establishment in North Britain is now exhibited before the nation, in accordance with our fathers' faithful protest, as in a state of degrading bondage under Erastian control and direction. Other religious bodies, claiming connection with our reforming ancestors, and maintaining evangelical sentiments, have not yet returned to Reformation attainments, but acknowledge unscriptural systems, and do not faithfully testify against the evil measures and practices of civil rulers. Ignorance and error in doctrine, and laxity in discipline, extensively prevail throughout religious communities, important duties are neglected, and sealing ordinances are profaned by unworthy persons being allowed to partake of them. Great masses of the people are left to live in ungodliness, and perish in sin, without any adequate means being employed to reclaim and instruct them. Such things do great dishonour to the King of Zion, foster deception in multitudes, confirm the world in ungodliness, and are followed by the ruin of many souls.

With departure from our fathers' testimony, gross errors are avowed, and, in some quarters, spreading. Socinian and Arian heresies pervert the Scriptures, and blaspheme the only Lord God and our Saviour. Arminianism, aiming to subvert the Gospel of sovereign free grace, leavens large portions of the ecclesiastical community. The carnal views of Millenarians tend to mar the progress of true godliness, and impede exertions for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

And Voluntaryism, as opposed to the Headship of the Mediator over the nations, and to the duty of rulers to foster the Church, encourages still further departure from former Reformation attainments, and would prevent the return of the nation to a Scriptural standard. For these manifold evils, existing in the British Churches, amidst abundant light and privilege, we desire to be deeply humbled before

God, and to mourn in secret places. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burnt up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

3d. Our own great and aggravated transgressions, as individuals, and as a covenanted, witnessing people.

Desiring to be deeply humbled, we confess with shame before God, the Searcher of hearts, that we have provoked the Divine displeasure by neither remembering nor fulfilling the obligations under which our solemn Covenants have placed us; we have not practically testified as we ought against the sins of the nation, nor endeavoured, by our exhortations, prayers, and examples, to bring back the people from courses of backsliding; even some of our members, inconsistently with their Covenant engagements, in a time of great public excitement, towards the close of the last century, were drawn into an unscriptural confederation for the attainment of political objects. We have greatly undervalued the inestimable blessings of the Gospel, nor have we been duly concerned to experience its power. We confess and lament our unbelief, formality, selfishness, worldly-mindedness, and carnality, our declension from first-love, lukewarmness, and sinful security, and our great want of tenderness, watchfulness, and spirituality in our disposition and deportment. Our remissness in secret, family, and social worship, bears testimony against us, and we have, alas! taken too little delight in searching the Scriptures, self-examination, and wrestling with God in prayer. We have not walked as becomes the Gospel of Christ, but have greatly failed in all duties that we owe to God, ourselves, and our neighbour.

Sufficient care has not been taken to instruct the ignorant, and to separate the precious from the vile in the fellowship of the Church. We have not been affected as we should by the falls of professors, nor taken warning from them ourselves, nor sufficiently mourned in secret for the dishonour done to God by these scandals, nor pitied nor prayed for those who have so fallen.

We have not exhorted one another daily, according to the Divine direction, nor cherished the love of the brethren, as we ought; and, by our apathy and unfaithfulness, we have largely partaken in the sins of others.

We desire to be humbled greatly because we have neither duly watched against carnal company and converse, nor studied to recom-

mend religion to others, by a holy, edifying conversation and consistent example, nor have we, as we ought exhorted and admonished one another in meekness and love, and we have failed to improve many precious opportunities of social prayer and spiritual conference.

We have been barren and unfruitful in the ways of the Lord. Parents have not been duly careful to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, nor to make them early acquainted with the distinctive principles of a faithful testimony. We mourn the breaches of Zion, and would confess that, by our pride, self-seeking, worldly spirit, and want of brotherly affection, we have had a great hand in her divisions; many have been seeking their own things, few the things that are Christ's.

We have come short in obeying the command of our associated Lord, to preach the Gospel to every creature. In the enjoyment ourselves of eminent privileges, we have been too much at ease—we have dwelt in our cooled houses, while the Lord's house lies waste, and multitudes have lived and died ignorant of Christ and His salvation, without adequate efforts on our part to enlighten them. More than is meet has been withheld from the support of a faithful ministry, and the extension of truth in the dark places of the earth.

While we complain of our poverty, we have provoked God to deal with us as unjust stewards; we have, in some instances, inordinately sought the advancement of our families—property is still consumed on intoxicating drinks and the vanities of life. We have come short of our duty to live as the lights of the world and the salt of the earth—we have not walked worthy of our high vocation as Christians and covenanted witnesses, notwithstanding the eminent privileges, a high profession, repeated solemn vows, and many manifestations of God's favour.

For all these, and other sins not mentioned in this Confession, we desire to be deeply humbled before God. We acknowledge that the Lord our God is righteous and holy in the judgments which He has sent upon this nation, and that, should He cast us out of His sight, and, still further, send a sword among us to avenge the quarrel of His Covenant, He would only be dealing with us in deserved indignation. Seeing that the Lord, the Covenant-God of our fathers, is yet waiting to be gracious, and that He has left Him yet a small remnant in the land, we earnestly desire and pray that He would pardon our personal and relative offences, and purge away the sins of this whole Church and land, bring back His departed glory, and

dwell among us, owning us as His people, and thus accomplish a speedy and blessed reformation. All which we unfeignedly and earnestly seek, through the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ, our redeeming Head and Lord.

NO. VI.—ACT OF COVENANT RENOVATION;

IN WHICH THE NATIONAL COVENANT OF SCOTLAND, AND THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT, ARE RENEWED, IN ACCOMMODATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

WE, whose names are underwritten, professing the faith once delivered to the saints, and resting our souls for eternal salvation on the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do, with grateful and united hearts, desire to praise the Lord for the light of the Reformation, and especially for the glory and fulness of the Covenanted Reformation, as it once shone in Scotland, and in part also in England and Ireland. Regarding its rise and establishment as a singular and eminent fruit of the Divine favour to the lands of our nativity, we this day recognise the Scriptural excellence of its grand principles as they were embraced by the Church and Kingdom of Scotland, and as exhibited in the National Covenant, and afterwards avouched by persons of all ranks in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Kingdoms. These federal deeds, being moral and Scriptural in their nature, and entered into by these nations through their representatives, are and will be binding upon them till the latest posterity. Although we are not now in circumstances to renew these Covenants in a national capacity, we, nevertheless, acknowledge them as the righteous and fundamental compact, according to which the legislation and administration of these kingdoms should be conducted, and the qualifications of rulers, and the reciprocal duties of rulers and people, should be settled. We also gladly express our approval of the conduct of our worthy ancestors who renewed the National Deeds on several occasions, pledging themselves, as a minority, to the whole of the Covenanted Reformation, when the majority of the nation had violated the oath of God. Deploring the sin of the nation in the rejection of these Covenants, and desiring to be free of any participation in its guilt, after mature deliberation and much searching of heart, we resolve, following the example of God's people in former times both in these and in other

lands, and relying on the strength of Divine grace, to renew the National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant, in the terms of this bond adapted to our present condition and circumstances.

WE, therefore, with all reverence and humility, approach the Majesty in the Heavens, and lifting up our heart with our hands; do jointly and severally Swear, in His great name—

I. THAT having, after careful examination, embraced the true religion as it is taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and exhibited in the Doctrinal Standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, we joyfully, before God and the world, profess this as the true Christian faith and religion, and by the grace of God we shall sincerely and constantly endeavour to understand it more fully, preserve it pure and entire, and transmit it faithfully to posterity. Confessing with our mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believing in Him with our hearts, we accept of God in Christ as our all-sufficient Portion, and we yield ourselves soul and body to be the Lord's now and for ever.—And as His professed servants, relying solely upon the Redeemer's righteousness for acceptance, we take the Moral Law as the rule of our life, and engage that we shall study to walk in all God's commandments and ordinances blamelessly. Living to the glory of God as our chief end, we shall diligently attend to the duties of the closet, the family, the stated fellowship-meeting, and the sanctuary, and shall seek in them to worship God in spirit and in truth. We solemnly promise, in reliance on God's grace, to abstain from known vice and all appearance of evil, to cultivate Christian charity, to do good to all men as we have opportunity, and to endeavour, by a constant course of godly practice, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

II. And while we own and profess the True Religion, pledge ourselves to its preservation, and to endeavour to bring the Churches in these kingdoms, and throughout the world, to the nearest Scriptural conjunction and uniformity, we, at the same time, solemnly abjure all false religion, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness. Particular, we abjure and condemn the tyranny, heresy, superstition, and idolatry of the Romish Antichrist; we condemn his usurpation of the prerogatives of our Lord Jesus Christ as Head of His

Church; his blasphemous priesthood and wicked hierarchy; and his subjugation of civil government to their cruel dominion. We wholly reject the claims of the Romish Church to supremacy and infallibility; its perversion of the rule of faith by unwritten traditions; the exaltation of Apocryphal writings to equality with the Word of God; and its denial of the use of the Scriptures, and of the right of private judgment, to the people. We repudiate and abhor the manifold corruptions in doctrine, as they respect original sin, justification by faith, the meritorious work of Christ, and the work of the Spirit in sanctification; the nature, number, and use of the Sacraments; and the state of the dead. We condemn its corruptions of the moral law, by the wicked distinction between mortal and venial sins; the merit and satisfaction of human works; mental reservation; absolving from oaths and contracts; and impious interference with the law of marriage. We abhor its idolatry, superstition, and corruption in worship, by the adoration of the Virgin and of images, and invocation of saints and angels; the offering of the mass as a sacrifice for the sins of the dead and the living; veneration of relics; canonisation of men; consecration of days and places; and prayers in an unknown tongue; processions, and blasphemous litany; and, finally, we detest and condemn its corruption and cruelty in discipline and government, by granting indulgences, enjoining penances, promulgating and executing cruel decrees, warranting persecutions and massacres; with its countless superstitious rites and usages, and its gross and intolerable bigotry, in excluding from the hope of salvation all who do not acknowledge its wicked supremacy, and maintain its soul-destroying heresies. And we engage, according to our places and stations, and by all Scriptural means competent thereto, to labour for the extirpation of this monstrous combined system of heresy, idolatry, superstition, and oppression, believing it to be fundamentally opposed to the glory of God, the enemy of Christ and His Gospel, and destructive to men's souls, liberties, and civil rights; at the same time, in love to the persons of those who are under the thralldom of Antichrist, we shall earnestly seek that they may be delivered out of Babylon, that so they may not be partakers in her coming plagues.

In like manner, we reject and abjure Prelacy as essentially unscriptural and Antichristian, and as oppressive to the Church of Christ and hostile to the interests of pure and undefiled religion. We testify against the Established Church of England and Ireland, for its imperfect reformation, and its long continuance in the sin of

many Antichristian practices; for its abject acquiescence in the Erastian supremacy of the Crown; for its want of Scriptural discipline; and for sinful connivance at the propagation, by many of its ministers and members, of Puseyism, which embraces some of the worst errors and usages of Popery. We reject Socinianism, Arminianism, Arianism, Erastianism, Antinomianism, Millennarianism, Voluntaryism, and all systems opposed to the truth. Disowning and condemning all infidelity and libertinism, falsely called liberality, we pledge ourselves to pray and labour, according to our power, that whatever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness may be removed, that thereby a free course may be opened up for the diffusion of the Gospel throughout all nations.

III. Believing that the peace and prosperity of the nation, and the quietness and stability of the Reformed religion, depend in a great degree on the establishment of a Scriptural system of civil rule, and upon the approved character of rulers, supreme and subordinate, we engage, with all sincerity and constancy, to maintain, in our several vocations, with our prayers, efforts, and lives, the doctrine of Messiah's Headship, not only over the Church, but also over the civil commonwealth. We promise that our allegiance to Christ shall regulate all our civil relations, attachments, profession, and deportment. We shall labour, by our doctrines, prayers, and example, to lead all, of whatever rank, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And we shall constantly endeavour, by all Scriptural means, as far as in our power, to bring these nations to own the Mediator as the Head of all principality and rule, to subject the national polity to His authority, and to set up those only as rulers who submit to Christ the Lord, and are possessed of a due measure of Scriptural qualifications. We recognise the obligation of the Public Covenants upon the nation, we protest against the subversion of the Scriptural and Covenanted Constitution of the land, and we hold ourselves bound faithfully to testify against, and in every righteous way to resist, whatever would prevent the nation from returning to former righteous attainments. At the same time, we shall continue to promote the ends of public justice, and give our support to whatever is for the good of the commonwealth in which we dwell, when this can be done without any sinful condition; and we shall continue to pray to God for the coming of His kingdom, in the overthrow of all systems of iniquity, and in the universal pacification of the nations of the earth.

IV. Being persuaded that a time is coming when there shall be a high degree of unity and uniformity in the visible Church; believing, moreover, that schism is sin; lamenting the existence of divisions, and firmly trusting that divisions shall cease, and the people of God become one Catholic Church over all the earth, we shall seek the reformation of religion in the lands in which we live, and shall endeavour after a uniformity in religion among the Churches of God in the three Kingdoms and throughout the world. Considering it a principal duty of our profession to cultivate a holy brotherhood, we regard ourselves as bound to feel and act as one with all who in every land pursue the grand ends contemplated in the Presbyterian Covenanted Reformation. We take ourselves pledged to assist and defend one another in maintaining the cause of true religion. Whatever shall be done to the least of us, for that cause, shall be taken as done to us all; and we shall suffer ourselves neither to be divided nor withdrawn, by whatever suggestion, allurements, or terror, from this blessed confederation, but shall continue to display the testimony of our fathers as the ground of approved union, and by the dissemination and application of the principles embodied therein, and by the cultivation of Christian charity, we shall labour to remove stumbling-blocks, and to gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness.

V. Believing that the ascended Mediator is not only King in Zion, but also King over all the earth, and that His glory is destined yet to fill the whole world, we desire to dedicate ourselves, in our respective places, to the great work of making known His light and salvation throughout the nations. We solemnly engage, by our prayers, pecuniary contributions, and personal exertions, to seek the revival of true religion, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, that men, both in their individual and national capacity, may submit themselves to the Redeemer—that men may be blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed.

And this solemn Act of Covenant-Renovation we enter upon in the presence of Almighty God, the Searcher of all hearts, with unfeigned intention, through the grace of the Most High, of paying our vows to the Lord. In entering upon such a great and momentous undertaking at the present time, we trust we are actuated by no sinister, selfish, or carnal motives, but simply by the desire, in our several places, of promoting the glory of God and the best interests, for time and eternity, of immortal souls. We commit ourselves, and

ours, our cause and influence, our safety and life, into His hands who is faithful and true, waiting continually for His certain and glorious appearance. Seeking grace from on high to fulfil our solemn engagements, we most humbly beseech the Lord to strengthen us, by His Holy Spirit, for this end, and to bless our proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to His people, and encouragement to other Christian Churches to join in this or a similar bond, with a view to the peace and prosperity of Christian commonwealths, and the enlargement and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end.—AMEN.

No. VII.

THE following Ministers, Licentiates, and Ruling Elders, renewed the Covenants at the Special Meeting of Synod, at DERVOCK, October 12, 1853: and afterwards appended their names to a copy of the "Act of Covenant Renovation," engrossed on parchment:—

MINISTERS.

William John Stavely, D. D.	Samuel Simms.
James Dick.	Thomas Carlile.
James A. Smyth.	Hutchison M' Fadden.
Samuel Carlile.	William S. Ferguson.
William Toland.	Robert Wallace.
James P. Sweeny.	Thomas Houston, D. D.
Robert Nevin.	William Russel.
James Kennedy.	William M'Carroll.
Josias A. Chancellor.	

LICENTIATES.

George Lillie.	James R. Thompson.
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RULING ELDERS.

John Picken.	John Simms.
George Kennedy.	Samuel M'Bratrey.
Samuel M'Keown.	Robert Beatty.
Henry Anderson.	Samuel Carlile.
Samuel Pollock.	John Duncan.
James Finlay.	Samuel Danagh.
Edward Hall.	William Clugston.
John Robinson.	John Hyndman.
John M'Dougal.	John Potts.
Thomas Galway.	James Reynolds.
James Little.	William Harvey.
Hugh Thompson.	John Graham.
James Sloan.	John M'Full.
Ephraim Chancellor.	Moses Chesnutt.
Robert Witherhead.	Francis Kane.
Robert Reynolds.	Robert Clarke.
William Gregg.	John Beatty.

☞ Of the Elders who took and subscribed the Bond, besides those who were members of Synod, the following were admitted to the act of Covenant Renovation, on the recommendation of their respective Sessions, viz. :—

From *Kellswater*,—John Duncan, Samuel Danagh, William Clugston, and John Hyndman.

From *Knockbracken*,—Samuel M'Bratrey, Robert Beatty, and Samuel Carlile.

From *Belfast*,—John Potts and James Reynolds.

From *Baliesmill*,—William Harvey, Thomas Galway, and John Graham.

From *Ballymoney*,—John M'Full, Moses Chesnutt, Francis Kane, and Robert Clarke.

Mr. James Renwick Thompson, Licentiate, and Mr. John Beatty, Elder, were from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, United States, America.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1. The Divine Commendation of Abraham; or, Parental Duties, and the Blessings resulting from their Faithful Performance.—18mo. pp. 276.

“The volume itself is very scriptural and excellent.”—*Presbyterian Review*.

2. The Faithful Minister's Walk with God, removal by Death, and Future Glory.—8vo. pp. 66.

3. The Christian Magistrate.—8vo. pp. 124.

4. The Duty of Nations favoured with Divine Revelation, to promote Scriptural Education, in Two Discourses.—8vo. pp. 105.

5. Life, Letters, Characteristics, &c. of the Rev. John Livingstone—with Historical Introduction and Notes.—18mo. pp. 290.

6. Youthful Devotedness: or, the Youth of the Church Instructed in the Duties of Practical Religion—with Recommendatory Preface by the late Professor Symington, D.D., Paisley.—Second Edition.—Price 2s 6d.—or 3s. gilt.

“A work much needed, and ably executed.—Would to Heaven that thousands of our youth would peruse its pages, receive its lessons, and apply its rules!”—*Scottish Guardian*.

7. A Practical Treatise on Christian Baptism.—Price 3s.

“An invaluable work.—It is written with great clearness and perspicuity—characterized by a force and an eloquence of style which will not fail to interest the reader.”—*Rothsay Journal*.

“Dr. Houston's book is rich in lessons of personal edification.”—“It is pre-eminently the best of its class with which we are acquainted.”—*Banner of Ulster*.

“The whole work is one of great interest, and merits public favour, both from the importance of the subject, and its powerful treatment.”—*Paisley Journal*.

8. The Judgment of the Papacy, and the Reign of Righteousness.—Price 2s.

“This is a book very much to our taste. The author looks at the world and the church in the light of Scripture, and accordingly he views every thing practically.—We wish for the book a wide circulation, and for the enlightened author much usefulness in all his labours.”—*Sco. Cong. Mag.*

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“We have not read a more complete, and at the same time a more condensed history and exposure of the Race system, than is to be found in this little work of Dr. Houston's.”—*The Commonwealth*.

10. Zion's Light Come: an Encouragement to Holy Effort. A Discourse delivered at the Opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland, July 10, 1854.—Price 6d.

11. The Fellowship Prayer-meeting:—The Institution, Nature, History, and Advantages of Select Christian Fellowship; with Directions for conducting Social Religious Exercises.—Price 1s. 6d.

